

THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 12

May, 1930

Number 5

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CRISIS*

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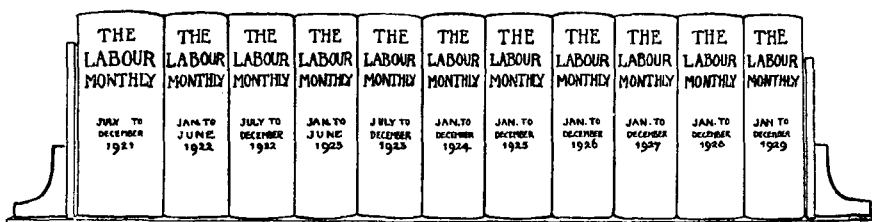
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NOTES OF THE MONTH

MAY DAY AND THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

May Day, 1930 — World Economic Crisis — Why? — Outcome of Rationalisation — Rôle of Labour Government — Saving the Labour Government—New Crisis of British Imperialism — Factors of Crisis — New Rôle of United States—Naval Conference Outcome — May Day and After.

MAY DAY, 1930, comes in conditions which may well give the whole British working-class movement pause to think. For four years now since the memorable May Day that ushered in the General Strike the agents of capitalism in the working class, the MacDonalds and Thomases, have had their way unchecked. They have preached the line of industrial peace, of rationalisation and of a Labour Government as the path to a new era of prosperity. They have had a free hand, with the plentiful aid of capitalism, to carry out their line and to enforce it ; they have paralysed the workers' struggle, dissected the organised working-class movement and turned its whole machinery into a machine of capitalism ; and on this basis they have built up their second Labour Government. These four years have seen the evolution of social reformism into social fascism. Their Labour Government has now been in office close on a year. And what is the outcome of the whole process ? Where has it brought the workers ? Where are the fruits of their promises ? On this May Day the workers may well draw up the account, and take stock of where they stand.

WHAT is the outcome ? Unemployment is higher than it has been for eight years, since first the crisis broke on British capitalism. New attacks upon the workers, with the direct aid of the Labour Government, go forward ; and

the battle of the wool wage cut, awarded by the Labour Government's arbitrator and former Labour Minister, marks this May Day. Rationalisation is driving the workers on the streets. A world economic crisis is gathering volume and sharpening the situation in every country. At the same time, the Soviet Workers' Republic, the representative of the alternative path, of the revolutionary path, is forging ahead on the road of socialist construction, with a rising standard of life for the workers and falling unemployment. In the face of this, the forces of capitalism are gathering against the Soviet Union in an intense and world-wide campaign, in which the Labour Government is playing a rôle comparable to that of the old Liberal Government before the Anglo-German war. War preparations and armaments building are speeded forward under cover of the Naval Conference decisions. The wave of repression in India reaches new heights against the rising mass struggle. Worsened conditions, the bloody work of imperialism, and the drive to war—was it for this the workers listened to the promises of MacDonald ?

BUT the world economic crisis, plead the Labour Ministers, is not the fault of the Labour Government. Unemployment may be high in Britain ; but it is higher in the United States and Germany. The fact is correct ; but not the deduction. Whose is the policy that has led to these results in the United States and Germany ? It is precisely the same type of policy that has led to the same outcome. Social Democracy in control of the German trade unions and the American Federation of Labour have pursued the same basic policy of strangling the workers' struggle, of co-operation with capitalism, of industrial peace and scientific intensification of production, as the path to prosperity. America has been the model country, the golden land, of the Second International. And to-day the President of the American Federation of Labour announces that one worker in four is unemployed and warns the Government that it will have to do something for the unemployed workers or " have a revolution on its hands " ; while the police authorities in New York announce the mobilisation of 19,000 armed police, with machine guns and gas bombs, in preparation for May Day in New York.

IT is the policy of the Second International, of the Western European and American aristocracy of labour, that finds its outcome and its bankruptcy in the present world economic crisis. The world economic crisis is the inevitable outcome, predicted by the revolutionaries, of the whole process of rationalisation and intensified production, at the expense of the class struggle, which was preached as the path to prosperity. It is "only over-production," declares Thomas, without realising that in so saying he has expressed the condemnation, not only of the whole régime of capitalism he exists to maintain, but equally of the whole policy of the Labour Party and of the Trade Union General Council. "Reconstruction" within capitalism is to-day exposed, no longer only in theory, but in the experience and suffering of tens of millions, to be, not the "practical" path of advance, but a lying legend, whose reality is the intensified exploitation of the workers, intensified world competition, inevitable crisis, and the drive to war. And the only "solution" of these prophets for the crisis is more of the poison that has led to it, more cutting of costs, *i.e.*, driving down of the workers, to defeat competitors, more intensified world competition and imperialist antagonism. It is at this stage that a Labour Government becomes essential to capitalism to carry through the ugly tasks imposed by the crisis at home and abroad; and social reformism expands into its full realisation in social fascism.

WHAT is the purpose of the Labour Government for the bourgeoisie? A singularly clear expression of its direct rôle for the bourgeoisie in relation to the world crisis is afforded by a recent editorial of *The Times* on "Egypt and a Labour Government," which declares:—

Every far-sighted view of our Imperial interests, and of the hope of removing them altogether from party controversy, goes to show how important it is that a Labour Government, and no other, should have the handling of the great external problems which are crowding upon us this year—the Naval Conference; the Imperial Conference; Egypt; above all India. If anyone doubts it, let him consider the alternative of an opposition formed by a strong but inexperienced Labour Party which had never yet been confronted with these

particular responsibilities in office. There would be no question in that case of anything like a national agreement such as already seems likely to accept the outcome of the Naval Conference. . . . That is one reason why it is still possible to view with detachment both the revived alliance between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Snowden and the manifest discomfort of the Conservatives and their new associates, since the one immediate result of both movements is to keep Labour in office for a longer period. (*The Times*, April 15, 1930.)

The policy expressed in this statement is worthy of consideration by Labour supporters.

THIS Conservative organ of the dominant interests of British Imperialism, of the capitalism which the Labour Party was nominally supposed to fight, finds it not only worth while, but "important," to maintain a Labour Government, and "to keep Labour in office for a longer period"; it even rejoices in the temporary "discomfort" of the Conservatives, and in the accession of strength to the Labour Government by the Liberal alliance. The workers are increasingly losing faith in the Labour Government; the "left" outrunners of the Labour Party daily warn their Government that the mood of the masses is changing and that there is "danger" of the whole swindle of the Labour Government being seen through; the Brightside by-election already showed an unprecedented slump of nearly 50 per cent. in the Labour vote in an industrial constituency within a few months of the experience of the Labour Government. At this point capitalism comes out into the open directly to aid and maintain the Labour Government; calls up its Liberal reserves to ensure the continuance of the Government; and takes over and subsidises the official Labour organ in order to spread more effectively the weakening Labour propaganda throughout the country. It is "important" to "keep Labour in office for a longer period." And for what purpose? This is openly stated. In order to meet the needs of imperialism in the world crisis, the issues of India and Egypt, of the Naval Conference and the Imperial Conference, as also (what is not stated in this particular expression, dealing only with external affairs, but what is equally part of the whole process) of rationalisation and the drive against the workers at home.

THE present crisis hits British Imperialism very much harder than is yet generally realised. The world economic crisis hits the majority of other countries at the crest of a boom of expanding production and trade. It hit British Imperialism already in a state of chronic depression. World trade stood at some 20 per cent. above pre-war values ; British exports stood at 20 per cent. below. This meant already a weakening position, and, in particular, a weakening hold upon the Empire : between 1913 and 1927 the proportion of Empire imports from Britain fell from 44 per cent. to 36 per cent., while that from countries outside the empire rose from 44 per cent. to 51 per cent., or the majority position. It meant, above all, a weakening rate of accumulation for imperialist expansion ; the net credit balance on all transactions, estimated by the Board of Trade, showing the real volume of new capital available for export, stood at £150 millions in 1929, as against £181 millions in 1913, or a drop of 42 per cent. on the pre-war value. To meet this weakening position, yearly more menacing against the growing expansion of the United States and other Powers, the most desperate drive against the workers and efforts towards rationalisation and reorganisation have been attempted ; but these also, owing to the special conditions of the situation, the deadweight burdens, rentier interests, &c., have not been able to keep pace with the rapid advance of the other industrial Powers, and have in consequence not been able to check the continuous process of stagnation and increasing relative decline.

BUT it is upon this situation that the world economic crisis has broken. The world economic crisis means at once a contraction of the world market and a desperate effort of every industrial power to raise its exports as its sole solution of the crisis. The grain and raw material-producing countries, the principal markets for Britain, are thrown into impoverishment. This affects particularly the British Dominions and colonies, Australia, Canada and India. This means diminished purchasing power and, where the way is open, such measures as the new prohibitive Australian tariff. The British Dominions refused to take part in the International Tariff Conference promoted by

Britain. The American tariff is being raised to the highest on record. British exports for the first quarter of 1930 fall to a low ebb, and unemployment reaches its highest point. At the same time, the United States, Germany and the other industrial Powers press forward to increase exports with redoubled intensity. Germany is compelled by the Young Plan payments and by the interest due on the large volume of foreign loans to achieve an enormous export surplus of something like £150 millions. Yet so far her trade balance has been passive until last year, and then only reached a surplus of £2 millions. But it is above all the position of the United States that is transformed.

THE position of the United States is transformed by the economic crisis. Hitherto the primary basis of her enormously expanding production has been the home market ; exports have only represented less than 10 per cent. of the total production. Increasingly, as this has shown signs of weakening, it has been artificially stimulated by every possible credit device (instalment purchasing, &c.). But this continuous expansion could not be maintained ; and with the summer of last year the first signs of collapse followed, with shrinking orders and declining production. The sensational Stock Exchange collapse in the autumn was only the consequence of this, when the astronomical total of forty thousand million dollars, or eight thousand million pounds (more than the total British war debt) of nominal values was wiped out in a few weeks. But this meant wholesale impoverishment of all except the upper bourgeoisie, who profited from the crisis and virtual confiscation for small investors ; the industrial crisis has meant wholesale dismissals, unemployment of some five millions or more ; and the agrarian crisis has meant desperate straits for the farmers, who constituted one of the main pillars of the home market. The resultant collapse of the home market has meant that the whole drive of American capitalism, if production and expansion is to be maintained, is necessarily concentrated on an enormous forcing up of exports. But already the small percentage of American exports has disorganised the world market, the United States steadily and increasingly replacing Britain in every market in the world. What will the position be now, when

the really desperate fight begins ? At the same time, the export of capital is forced forward by the diminution of profitable investment or speculation at home and the cheapening of money. In the first quarter of 1930, American new foreign issues amounted to more than for the first six months of 1929, \$257 millions as against \$245 millions. But this total export of over £50 millions in the first quarter of 1930 compares with a total British export of only £19 millions in the same period. The full Anglo-American fight only now begins to open.

IT is in this new and desperate stage of crisis that British Imperialism requires the Labour Government to take nominal responsibility, and carry the workers along, in its fight for life : in the ferocious drive to rationalisation and attacks on the workers, in the grip of steel on the empire as it strives to break free, in the ever sharpening Anglo-American antagonism and anti-Soviet antagonism. The intensification of world economic competition is accompanied by the intensification of imperialist antagonism in every field. The Naval Conference has reflected this. Never before has any Conference been marked by such prolonged deadlock and antagonism. Even the loudly heralded outcome of a partial agreement is manifestly only a registering of forces, not a solution of antagonisms. The agreement not only means in fact enormous building ; not only scraps in reality only two or three of the most obsolete ships, and for the rest makes a great show of scrapping ships that had never been built ; but in addition the new "parity" opens a new and intense competition within the forms and limits laid down (already foreshadowed in the announcement of the new British type of cruiser of under 10,000 tons, but with the speed, power and guns of the 10,000 ton type—it was precisely in the under 10,000 tons type that Britain secured its special advantage, on the plea that these would be only defensive ships for Empire purposes). "Pact That Will Save Britain £60,000,000" announces in glowing headlines the *Daily Herald's* Sunday partner, the *People*, "But We Shall Still Have Biggest Navy in the World." If the new agreement leads to the same type of competition as Washington did, remarks the *Economist*, "the agreement is likely to be of the greatest possible disservice to the world."

BUT even so far as the Naval Conference outcome represents a temporary patching up of immediate conflict, the consequent outlook is only the more menacing. For the force that lies behind any such temporary patching up and postponement of conflict, despite the increase of antagonism, is precisely the growing critical character of the world situation, the fear of the growing revolutionary wave, the fear, above all, of the growing power of the Soviet Union. The closer the Imperialist Powers draw together towards a temporary bloc against their common enemies, the more immediate grows the menace of the launching of the attack on the Soviet Union. This issue could already be discerned behind all the discussions of "security," of "consultative pacts," of Article 16 of the Covenant, and of the enforcement of the Kellogg Pact, at the London Conference. And in this issue, equally with the rest, the Labour Government is playing its rôle for imperialism. Thus on every front, on the economic front at home, on the colonial front, on the drive to war and the campaign against the Soviet Union, the situation is one of great and menacing issues. The need for the working class to break with the Labour Party and the Labour Government, and to unite, unemployed and employed together, under a common revolutionary leadership, is greater than ever. The gathering of the new forces goes forward, but all too slowly in relation to the needs of the situation and the issues that may break out at any point. The General Election of last year already marked a decisive step in the process, the final breaking of the revolutionary working class with the Labour Party and the building of the new army. The launching of the workers' daily at the beginning of this year, and the demonstrations of March 6, have carried the development forward. May Day of this year must mark a new stage of advance and preparation.

R. P. D.

SOME LESSONS OF THE WOOLLEN TEXTILE STRUGGLE

By CLEMENS DUTT

THE strike of the woollen textile operatives in the West Riding of Yorkshire marks the opening of a new stage in the period of growing economic struggles in Britain. No such struggle in magnitude, in the militancy of the workers and in political significance has taken place since the General Strike in 1926. It is a strike on a mass scale taking place in a period of extreme economic depression, in direct opposition to the systematic strike-breaking tactics of the Trade Unions and in the face of the powerful opposition and hostility on the part of the Labour Government and its local agents and police forces. The strike has brought out new developments in the working of the trade union bureaucracy, in social fascism and in the breaking through of the masses towards independent leadership. For these reasons, it is a strike which expresses the whole character of the period now opening out and which provides valuable lessons for the future in regard to the forces arrayed against the workers and in regard to the tactics required for the successful development of the struggle.

The Capitalist Crisis

The line of attack against the workers is characteristic of the period of decline of British capitalism and of the present intensifying economic crisis. The capitalist decline in the woollen industry has become progressively more marked since 1920. Exports of piece goods have show a steady decline since 1925. At the same time, there has been a continuous contraction of the home market. Towards the end of 1929 a special intensification of the crisis set in. It is an indication of this that, while in 1929 15 per cent. of the workers were unemployed, in February, 1930, the proportion unemployed in the woollen industry jumped to about 20 per cent.

This special crisis represents the reflection of the growing economic crisis throughout the world, the effect of which is heightened in the wool industry by the competition of rationalised industry in other countries and the difficulties experienced by the employers owing to out-of-date machinery, over-capitalisation and inefficient organisation of production. The capitalist solution of the crisis consists, firstly, in attacks on the standard of the workers, and, secondly, in the imposition of a high import tariff. For both of these measures they have been able to secure the support of the trade union machinery. Trade union backing was attained for the "safeguarding" schemes and the trade unions offered no opposition to the developing attack against the workers.

First of all, in November, 1927, the old National Agreement was scrapped and this led the way for a piecemeal but continuous introduction of speeding-up methods, especially by means of the shift system, the increased use of juvenile labour and to some extent also the lengthening of hours. At the same time, the wholesale attack on wages was carefully prepared during 1929 by successive sectional attacks. A 10 per cent. wage reduction was first secured in the heavy woollen industry. Cuts of 5 per cent. or more were imposed on the more isolated workers of the Calder Valley and Spenn Valley. Strike resistance took place in several cases, but the trade unions lent their assistance to the employers in forcing through the reductions. By the end of 1929 some 20,000 workers had already suffered reductions in wages.

With the intensification of the economic crisis already seen to be approaching in the autumn of 1929, the employers felt that the time had come to prepare for the launching of a general offensive. In September, they asked for a 17 per cent. all-round reduction, a demand which they subsequently modified to 9.9 per cent. In October, the employers' final demands were reduced to 8.3 per cent. or 1s. 7½d. in the £. The Textile trade union officials were prepared to concede 7.25 per cent., but a ballot vote of the operatives decisively rejected any acceptance of wage reductions.

Further sectional attacks followed, and then in January, 1930, the Labour Government offered the use of its arbitration machinery

for overcoming the opposition of the workers. Under the disguise of the award of an impartial Court of Inquiry, the attempt was made to get the workers to accept what they had previously refused. The MacMillan award actually recommended a cut of 9.25 per cent., not only in this but in other respects also embodying more than the employers had previously demanded. Again, however, the workers refused to give way to the pressure put upon them. A ballot vote showed 77 per cent. of those taking part against the acceptance of the MacMillan terms. The argument of bad trade no longer availed to secure further sacrifices on the part of the workers. It was a decisive blow to the doctrine of class harmony and industrial peace. The workers ranged themselves on the side of class struggle, accepting all the issues that it involved.

Militant Spirit of the Workers

The strike action which followed proved conclusively that the ballot vote was no pious expression of opinion which would not be borne out by action. In view of the definite sabotage of the trade union officials and the enormous obstacles put in the way of class-conscious united action by the operatives, it was doubted in some quarters whether there would be the mass resistance to the employers' attempt to enforce the MacMillan wage cuts. Events soon clearly showed that the workers as a whole were in no mood for surrender.

The successful inauguration of the Central Rank and File Committee of Action at Bradford, in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles put in its way, indicated the tremendous growth of revolutionary spirit among the workers and which soon bore fruit in the solid response to the strike call issued by the Committee of Action. This militancy was especially evident at the larger mills in Bradford and Shipley which gave the key to the whole situation. This was the more emphasised by the fact that it was only at the very last moment that the trade unions even gave any countenance to the strike at all, and clearly they did so only because the workers were as a whole standing solidly behind the strike call of the Central Committee of Action, so that an open and immediate declaration against the strike would have completely discredited them.

Many events testify to the militancy of the workers. In the storm centres of Bradford and Shipley, covering over 60,000 woollen operatives, the workers came out enthusiastically and in mass. Above all, it was women who led the way. From the very first day, mass pickets with hundreds of young lassies appeared at mill gates in the early morning determined to prevent blacklegs going in. When at Lister's Mill, in Bradford, the police attempted to prevent Comrade E. Woolley, a Communist and organiser for the Minority Movement, from addressing the picket, it was the young workers who rushed forward and faced the police batons that were indiscriminately used against them. At one mill, such was the threatening attitude of the strikers, that the manager was compelled to agree to a deputation from the strike picket going through the mill to see that there were no blacklegs working on the premises. In another mill, the heavy mill gates were forced open by the strikers, in spite of the police forces present, in the endeavour to get at the workers inside. It is significant that after a few days, on April 14, most of the larger mills in Shipley posted notices saying that no one affected by the dispute was working inside. In the valleys outside Bradford the workers are more isolated and experience greater difficulties in conducting their struggle. Yet here also events occurred which showed the militant spirit of the strikers. Thus, for example, one of the first mills to come out was an isolated large mill at Heckmondwike, in the Spen Valley. Although less than one-third of the workers are organised and there were no instructions from the union officials, after a visit from representatives of the Committee of Action the stoppage was nearly complete. It is an indication both of the militancy of the strikers and of the unchecked powers of the police that members of the picket here were heavily fined for the offence under the Trade Disputes Act of "persistently following" certain blacklegs.

It must be remembered that these mass pickets were composed almost entirely of unorganised workers. There was no lockout. The mills were open, and the managers did their best, when it was safe to do so, to induce operatives to enter the mill. Further, most of the workers had no clear instructions as to what they were

to do. Thus, the mass refusal to accept reductions was an immediate and spontaneous action in response to the direct initiative of the rank and file Committee of Action. Actually, the unorganised workers showed themselves if anything more militant than the organised workers, for the latter were more amenable to the damping influence of the trade unions and their propaganda and preparations for wage reductions.

The Exposure of the Labour Government

The rôle played by the Labour Government in the present struggle has done more to expose its true character in the eyes of the woollen textile workers than any other single act performed by it since coming into office a year ago. In no other case has the use of Government-appointed arbitration machinery as a weapon for enforcing wage reductions been so glaring and so open. The appointment of MacMillan, an ex-Tory, who had been made Lord Advocate in the previous Labour Administration, as the sole member constituting a Court of Inquiry, was an unmistakable indication of what the character of the report would be.

As already mentioned, the award actually went beyond the employers' immediate demands. The latter were prepared to be satisfied with a wage reduction of 8.3 per cent. The MacMillan Award offered them 9.25 per cent. Further, it proposed the total abolition of the wage scales for young workers, leaving the employers to make their own terms. Even more than that, it put forward as a principle to be taken account of in reckoning wage levels the value of social services performed by the State, a principle which was naturally heartily welcomed by the capitalists as it obviously provides the basis for a further all-round attack on wages in every industry.

The Labour Government stands revealed as the leader in the drive for forcing through wage reductions. In consonance with this, the machinery of the State is employed more and more openly and brutally in order to break the resistance of the workers. The Labour Government requires the strike-breaking powers given by the Trade Disputes Act in order to assist it in its attacks on the workers. That is the reason why the pledges to repeal the Act have remained unredeemed. Under the Labour Govern-

ment, in this struggle as in many other smaller struggles, many workers are being arrested and charged under the Act.

Especially characteristic of the Labour Government régime is the growing use of police violence against the workers. Already this was noticeable in the isolated strikes at woollen mills during the sectional attacks last year. In the present strike, more police are being employed than ever before. This increased severity is commented on by the workers who contrast it with the considerably milder conditions that prevailed during the woollen strike under the Tory Government in 1925. The police forces now being used are realised to be police forces of a Labour Government, controlled in Bradford by a Labour City Council. With this authority behind them the police are aware that theirs is a licensed brutality, particularly when directed against Communist leaders. Violent methods are deliberately employed in order to frighten the masses of workers from support of Communists or rank and file militant leaders, and in order to remove the latter from the field of action.

There are many signs that experience in the present struggle is burning the exposure of the Labour Government deeply into the consciousness of the workers. Rank and file militants who have spent their lives and energies working for the return of a Labour Government are now turning away in disgust. The woollen workers are directly fighting the Labour Government and the enormous political significance of their strike is plain to all.

Trade Union Strike Breaking

The history of the negotiations before the strike is marked by the full collaboration of the trade unions in the efforts of the employers to secure wage reductions. Desperate efforts were made to secure acceptance of the wage cuts. The two sides in the dispute were not the workers represented by their trade unions on the one side, against the employers on the other, but the mass of the workers struggling against the combined efforts of the employers and their own trade union leaders. Even after the MacMillan Award, the Executive Committee of the National Union of Textile Workers (which includes about 30,000 mainly

unskilled workers) issued a circular stating "it is not opportune at the present moment to resist the proposals," while Mr. Ben Turner declared that the proposed reductions were "too severe," but that "there is no denying the gravity of the financial position of the industry," a view expressing the general attitude which has governed the action of the trade union officials. Even this attitude is not due to any belief that the full reductions ought to be resisted; it was only due to the knowledge that the workers would not tolerate them.

Consequently, with a ballot vote of 77 per cent. in favour of strike action against the MacMillan Award, the textile officials were compelled to make a show of bargaining for better terms. Their efforts were confined to an attempt to secure an agreement with the employers on a reduction which could be put through without causing a complete stoppage and a wholesale revolt against their leadership. As the *Daily Herald*, in a leading article, phrased it :—

The co-operation of the employees, through their unions, is available to tackle the problems that undoubtedly face the industry. The wool employers will be well advised to enlist that aid.

Accordingly, the Executives of the Textile Trade Unions met and agreed that the augmented Executive of the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trade should propose a 5.8 per cent. reduction, pointing out that they were debarred from accepting the full MacMillan terms after the explicit rejection of them by a ballot vote of the membership. At the same time, they made it clear (it is said there was an unpublished secret letter) that they were ready to go far beyond the offer of 5.8 per cent. On April 10 *The Times* correspondent reported :—

It was made known yesterday that the leaders of the trade unions of the wool-textile industry have the authority to negotiate with the employers on other lines than in the proposals they put forward last week end.

Nevertheless, the strike took place and it was quickly evident that it would not be a fiasco. The trade unions took another step in strike-breaking. Not only did they do nothing to help the actual organisation of the strike at the mills (not a union picket was to be seen during the critical period of the first few days), but they took positive steps to break the solidarity of the strikers'

s

ranks by attempting to secure the resumption of individual mills on reduced wages. They offered an agreement for three months at the 5.8 per cent. reduction, in such cases a notice to be posted at the mill signed by the trade union and the employer, saying that the operatives are to continue at work and others in the dispute are requested to keep away from the works. To secure the co-operation of the operatives in this strike-breaking activity was the chief function of the so-called "Councils of Action," consisting of union officials, set up by the trade unions.

Already in the first few days Mr. Arthur Shaw, the Secretary of the N.A.U.T.T., reported that a number of employers had been so considerate as actually to call at the Trade Union offices in order to sign an agreement. It speaks volumes for the solidarity of the strikers that during the period before Easter there was not a single case to be found where any large body of workers resumed work because of the posting of such an agreement. The strike-breaking work of the trade unions, however, inevitably meant some demoralisation. The question of "individual agreements" has become a testing issue for the strike.

While the textile unions were working in this way to defeat the strike, the Trades Union Congress was, nevertheless, compelled to make a propaganda move of apparent support for the strike. The General Council of the T.U.C. announced that, because of the rebuff to its mediators, it would appeal to all trade unions for financial aid and itself make a grant of £500. Thus we find the General Council, in spite of its intimate connection with the Labour Government, undertaking aid for a strike against an award of the Labour Government. It is a move indicating how seriously the strike affected the position of the trade union leadership. Already the latter is as a whole in such danger of exposure, loss of leadership and support that it is forced to make a pretence of coming out to help the strikers in their fight in order to be able still to continue to pose as the leader of the workers in struggle and so more effectively to pave the way for surrender.

Independent Leadership of Struggle

By far the most important and significant feature of the present struggle is the development of new forms of fighting

organisation and the throwing up by the masses of a new independent leadership.

The Conference of Action convened by the Minority Movement in Bradford on March 23 elected a rank and file Committee of Action, which quickly assumed a leading rôle in the strike preparations throughout the area. When the first notices expired, in Spen Valley, Bradford and Shipley, representatives from the Committee of Action were on the spot to give a lead to the workers and to get the strike started. In a number of cases it was their call that brought the workers out when the latter were wavering and on the point of succumbing to the pressure of the mill managers.

During the days that followed, the Bradford Committee of Action converted itself into a Central Strike Committee and extended, deepened and consolidated its leadership. In Shipley a similar Committee was formed. In Bingley the so-called Council of Action was entirely discredited, most of the trade union officials were afraid of the police pressure and ran away, and the remainder appealed to the Bradford Central Strike Committee to help them to organise the strike and to resist the attempts at mass intimidation through the large police forces which had been drafted in. Representatives were obtained for the Bradford Committee from other places also. In Shipley, also, the workers were so indignant at the strike-breaking Council of Action, consisting of five officials only, that the latter were forced to add a number of rank and file workers, whereupon the latter resolved that the Council should become part of the Shipley rank and file Strike Committee.

Groups of workers from each mill represented on the Strike Committee undertook organisation of relief and formed the nucleus of Mill Committees. The majority of members of the Strike Committee and Mill Committees were unorganised workers. As in the mass pickets, these Committees were largely composed of young lads and lassies, inexperienced but enthusiastic and ready for anything. The youth sections of these Committees were, therefore, particularly important.

In the early period of the strike, the strength of the Central Strike Committee lay mainly in its ideological influence. It

prepared the way for strike action, and it issued the slogan for a fight against all wage reductions, which was the demand that rallied wide sections of workers. The organisation, however, of the Strike Committee was comparatively weak. Elected Mill Committees were practically non-existent. In the main, the members of the Strike Committee were not acknowledged leaders among the workers at their particular mills. That is to say, the Committee had all the defects of a new form of organisation which had not yet established itself. In the outlying areas, such as the heavy woollen centres, Dewsbury and Batley, where the workers had mostly already suffered reductions, and in the more isolated valleys the Central Strike Committee was not able to secure organised co-operation from the workers.

Nevertheless, the Central Strike Committee won a wide recognition as the alternative leadership to the strike-breaking leadership of the trade unions. This meant also a wide extension of the authority and influence of the Communist Party. In contrast to the period shortly before, when, owing to the hostile propaganda of trade union and Labour Party agents and the absence of members inside the mills, Communist speakers and organisers were often received with a certain indifference if not hostility, the strike found masses of workers consciously looking to the Communist Party for leadership. Thus, at one mill where there was an attempt to recruit blacklegs and a local trade union official happened to be on the spot, the workers rounded on him saying, "This of course happens with you here; if the Communists were here this would have been stopped." Another important influence in the dispute was the *Daily Worker*, sales of which played an important part in linking together strikers in different parts, and making clear the significance of the struggle as a whole.

Need of Mass Organisation and Support

The workers, through their concrete experience of the struggle, could not fail to appreciate the lessons which were being driven home by the Minority Movement and the Communist Party. Actual participation in the fight in a few weeks raised the best elements among the workers to a stage of development which otherwise would have taken a long period to reach. The weak-

nesses exhibited during the early period were weaknesses resulting from a lack of developed organisation, which clearly revealed that the strength of the workers in struggle depended on the strength of their class-conscious organisation, that the factor on which success depended and the extent to which permanent results could be obtained depended on the degree to which organisation based on the mills could be built up and the Minority Movement and the Communist Party consolidate its influence by recruiting individual members.

Further, the open strike-breaking of the trade unions and the consequent revolt against the petty official-ridden and craft-limited unions inevitably raised the issue as a question which would be bound to come up in future, even if not yet consciously expressed, of the need for a single united class-struggle union under fighting leadership.

Experience of the struggle is driving home the lesson of the need for militant resistance to the attack of capitalism, and of the perspective of still greater and more advanced struggles lying in front. It was evident that the employers' object was not merely to secure the MacMillan terms, but also to break the resistance of the workers and to induce such a mood of despair and defeat that further inroads could be made at will.

Woollen textile employers were hoping to secure a repetition of the defeat of the miners in 1926, so that for a long period afterwards the workers would be completely at their mercy. Just as the miners in 1926 were then fighting the battle of the British working class as a whole, so now the textile workers are facing a further stage in the same general attack. Consequently, their victory is a matter of life and death for all other workers. If they are defeated, the capitalist attack goes further ; if they gain the victory, a turning point has been reached and the defensive struggle of the workers will be in process of being converted into an offensive opening up the prospect of advance towards the final overthrow of capitalism and imperialism.

THE UNEMPLOYED AND MAY DAY

By HUGO RATHBONE

Some of us took our place at the head of processions of hungry men, not because we had any great faith in the benefit of processions as such, except to bring before the eyes of the comfortably fed the awful state of wretchedness and poverty, but because we felt that unless we led them through the streets and into the parks where they would be safe, there would be no other way but violence and unrestrained action with unhappy results to those who participated in any riot. We are safe from that to-day. . . ."—Margaret Bondfield in House of Commons debate on Unemployment, March 28, 1930. *Hansard*, col. 793.

IN these unblushing words a Labour Government's Minister of Labour described what was to her the principal "asset" of the Unemployment Insurance Acts. Processions, violence, riots—we are safe from that to-day. But is that so? Why then did the London Trades Council consider it expedient to cancel its much-trumpeted arrangements for a May Day procession this year. Was it cancelled merely to prove the truth of Margaret Bondfield's complacent remark: We are safe from that to-day? Or does it not rather prove the very *opposite*? Does it not prove that: We, the Labour Party, the Party in power are *no longer* safe. For processions of unemployed wherever led, to the parks or not, to-day are revolutionary demonstrations against the Labour Government, against capitalism, in whose name Margaret Bondfield speaks. Is it not clear that in spite of the 17s. dole, the decision of the London Trades Council to cancel its procession proves that any demonstration of the unemployed *is not only no longer safe but has positively become dangerous* to the existence of the Labour Government, and not merely of the Labour Government but of the entire system of capitalist exploitation?

March 6 has proved it. Margaret Bondfield affects to feel safe behind the batons of her police hirelings slashing down on unarmed unemployed marchers. She claims that 17s. a week has abolished that "awful state of wretchedness and poverty," that 17s. a week makes processions no longer necessary. "We are safe from that to-day." Nevertheless the army of unemployed

grows from week to week. The unemployed demonstrate in their thousands in spite of the 17s. dole. Twenty millions and more are on the streets throughout the world. The so-called problem of unemployment bulks ever larger, and ever more menacingly in the life of capitalist society.

But these remarks of Margaret Bondfield are not merely a travesty of the facts of life to-day, they are in addition a most unblushing confession of the traitorous nature of Labour Party leadership, of the nature of reforms as interpreted by the Labour Party. Take the leadership, so they calculate, in order to lead the unemployed safely into the parks away from the struggle for the streets, for the factories, for freedom ; gladly accept on their behalf the offer of a 17s. dole, and then sit back and declare : Now we are safe. The unemployed remain safely under the yoke of capitalism. Their labour power remains ready to be exploited whenever the capitalists again have need of it ; meanwhile the menace of their competition continuously keeps the price of the labour power of those workers who are employed at the lowest possible level. We are safe, say all the Bondfields : The continuance of capitalist exploitation is assured : Yes, our incomes as servants of capitalism, as Government servants, are no longer in danger.

But precisely because "the facts" as seen in the smug complacency of Margaret Bondfield, when she prattles of safety, are in reality a travesty of the facts of life, all these "reforms," all these "confessions" of betrayal avail the social democrats not one jot. The revolutionary significance of the continued growth in the number of the unemployed cannot be eliminated by the "reform" of a 17s. dole. The army of the unemployed in spite of all the "reformist" leadership of the social democrats becomes an ever more menacing problem to capitalist rule, to capitalist rule in the period of its decline. For this growth in the unemployed army is in fact the clearest indication of its decline, the most explosive force in hastening its final destruction.

Why is this ? What is the basic economic cause of unemployment under capitalism ? By supplying the answer to this question, we will not only expose the professions of social democracy that reforms will peacefully lead step by step from capitalism to socialism, we will not only expose the empty re-

volutionary phrases of the pseudo-Lefts about socialism in our time through a "radical" redistribution of wealth, but we will show that the struggle of the unemployed is more and more becoming a central feature of the workers' revolutionary struggle.

Causes of Unemployment

As Marx many years ago explained, in the industrial cycle under capitalism there are periods when the capacity to produce increases faster than the supply of labour power necessary for production. The price of labour goes up. More labourers are attracted to the production process, a stimulus is given to population to increase. But there comes a time when the increase in the price of labour so seriously reduces the surplus of the capitalist that his incentive to expand is blunted ; he curtails the expansion of production, closes down works, &c. ; those thrown out of work become a constant menace to those still in work, a menace which the capitalist well knows how to use to bring down again the price of the labour of those still employed. In achieving this the capitalist increases his surplus once again ; he accumulates part of this, expands his production again in order still further to increase his profit. The unemployed are again taken on. Again the price of labour may rise, for, though there may have been an increase of the mass of labour, the capacity of production may have been still more expanded. The same process begins again.

As Marx said in the first volume of *Capital* :—

The rise of wages, therefore, is confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalistic system, but also secure its reproduction on a progressive scale. The law of capitalist accumulation, metamorphosed by economists into a pretended law of nature, in reality merely states that the very nature of accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour, and every rise in the price of labour, which could seriously imperil the continual reproduction on an ever enlarging scale of the capitalistic relation. (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 680. 1912 Kerr Edition.)

But with the expansion of capitalist production, with the growth in the productiveness of labour, the demand for labour increases, but on a continually diminishing scale relative to the expansion of production. A greater and greater proportion of workers form the industrial reserve army of capitalism—a reserve army, however, which is not only necessary for its existence but also for its expansion.

As Marx further says :—

With the growth of the total capital, its variable constituent or the labour incorporated in it also does increase, but in a constantly diminishing proportion. . . . The labouring population, therefore, produces along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population and it does this to an always increasing extent. This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production. . . . The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army. (Vol. I, pp. 690, &c. 1912 Kerr Edition.)

From this we see that while the capitalist system provides its own check on the danger of the workers being able to command an ever higher wage owing to a temporary outpacing of the expansion of productive forces compared with the supply of labour necessary to set those forces in motion, yet this same system, continually by its very expansion, ever increases the number of unemployed, but at a still more rapid rate than the expansion of the forces of production.

Imperialism and Unemployment

Consequently, the necessity of capitalism to expand beyond its national frontiers became an ever more pressing need. But in this expansion, in this development of capitalism to imperialism, the capitalism of one nation, *e.g.*, England, met the capitalisms of other nations, all at different stages of development. The limits of capitalist expansion become more and more restricted. Unemployment, therefore, has more and more overtaken the rate of expansion, *i.e.*, the power of capitalism to absorb a portion of the increasing reserve army which it continually adds to in its expansion. Emigration, the monopoly of the market and colonial robbery as means by which capitalism might temporarily check the disproportionate growth of the army of the unemployed became more and more barren with, *e.g.*, (1) the growth of similar reserve armies in the countries which previously absorbed a portion of the unemployed as immigrants, or (2) the competition of the rising capitalisms in other lands also desiring a monopoly of the market, or (3) the completion of the division of the available lands where colonial robbery could be extended.

All these three methods by which the chief imperialist powers seemed temporarily to check the increasing misery of the exploited masses, with the complete division of the world, the complete domination of the world market by the imperialist monopoly groups, have become more and more barren of result. The reserve army of unemployed has now become not only a characteristic feature in England, in Germany, in all the old centres of capitalism, not only in the United States, where the apologists of capitalism had professed to have "organised" the menace of unemployment out of existence, but in the new "colonial" countries, in Australia, in Canada, in South Africa, in South America. Not only are there more than 20,000,000 unemployed workers throughout the world but also there are in these colonial countries numberless peasants and semi-proletarian elements who, having forcibly been brought under the domination of capitalist production, having forcibly been compelled to rely on capitalistically controlled markets, now in great masses, are being deprived, along with the 20,000,000 unemployed workers, of all means of existence.

Unemployment—Increasing Misery—Capitalist Crisis

Unemployment has become a truly international problem. The law of capitalist accumulation as analysed by Marx and as referred to by us above, which inevitably leads to the increasing misery of the masses exploited under capitalism—a consequence which numberless apologists of capitalism have repeatedly tried to refute, pointing to the slight alleviations of the lot of the workers in the imperialist countries—this law with its inevitable consequence of increasing misery is now more than ever obviously true.

For the phenomenal increase in unemployment, the tremendous lowering of the standards of large sections of the workers of the imperialist countries and the continuous attacks on the remainder, are all tearing aside the veil which had the effect of concealing this fundamental fact of capitalism—the ever increasing misery of the exploited masses. Now that the monopoly of the market has gone, now that the possibilities of emigration are becoming increasingly more restricted and above all now that colonial robbery cannot be resorted to on the ever increasing scale that was adopted in the past, the imperialist powers are undermining the aristocratic

position in which they were able to maintain the workers in the mother countries. For this veil of what seemed to be increasing alleviations in the lot of the workers at home, concealed the blood-thirsty era of unrestricted colonial robbery. What seemed to be the lessening misery of the exploited workers at home was paralleled by a terrific increase in the misery of the exploited masses in the colonial lands. But the maintenance of these alleviations, not to mention their increase, is conditioned by the expansion of the possibilities of colonial robbery, of increasing the misery of larger and larger masses of colonial peoples.

The increase in the mass of unemployment, the degradation of the standard of living of the workers in the imperialist countries is a sign of this crisis—the general crisis of capitalism.

The effects of the general crisis of capitalism can be seen more clearly in the case of British capitalism than in any other imperialist country, leading to a decay in British economy ; as it is Great Britain, the former workshop of the world, which has been most hardly hit by the rising capitalisms of other countries.

But this general crisis of capitalism is at present being intensified by the world economic crisis which is spreading throughout every country since the spectacular collapse of the American boom. As is shown by the following quotation for an American bourgeois writer this is essentially a crisis of over-production, a crisis which even in its pre-crisis period shows up the bourgeoisie plainly for all eyes to see, as a fetter on the productive forces which it itself has developed.

We have got production geared up to such speed and efficiency that we are faced with something more than the beginnings of a problem of getting the goods we are making, consumed. . . . We have to keep the production machinery throttled down. We dare not develop its latent potentialities.—*North American Review*, No. 5, November, 1929. (Quoted by Varga, *Imprecorr.* No. 8, 1930.)

In the face of this tremendous world crisis, the effects of which are only now beginning to be felt (for instance according to the *Observer* for April 13, a semi-official study of the unemployment situation, which is now proceeding in the United States, admits that six in every 100 of the population are idle ; that is to say over 6½ million workers ; when but a few weeks ago the Government was loudly asserting that 3 million was an outside

estimate), the capitalists are increasingly showing their complete lack of policy for coping with the economics of the situation. The following extraordinarily significant admission, coming as it does from that usually super-confident bourgeois leader, Winston Churchill, is a prime example of capitalism's anarchy of production. Note well the plaintive aspirations after some "co-ordinated" plan, aspirations, hopes for whose fulfilment soared sky high with the "endless prosperity" of American capitalism only to be hurled incontinently into the depths again by the collapse of these soap-bubble dreams of prosperity, with the Stock Exchange crash of last year heralding the present economic crisis.

As Churchill said :—

The difficulty of all of them was that they did not know, they had not found the underlying principle which enabled them to group together and harmonise all the various tendencies and pursue them in a co-ordinated way. They had not found the underlying explanation and the world was still at a loss to know how to bridge the mysterious gap between the producing and the consuming power. (Debate on Second Reading of the Unemployment Insurance No. 3 Bill : *The Times*, April 5, 1930.)

The Labour Government—A Capitalist "Solution"

With such an example before one it is not surprising to find that the remedies that capitalism has adopted to solve its general crisis have materially contributed towards intensifying the present world economic crisis.

The tremendous increase in monopolies only tends to increase productiveness, the attempted formation of international monopolies, such as the European Steel Cartel has shown, only intensify the conflicts between the national groups. Tariffs behind whose walls technique is feverishly developed, still further increasing productive forces, leads the imperialist countries into ever more intensified conflict. As Mr. Baldwin said in speaking of tariffs in his Coliseum speech (*The Times*, February 6, 1930), "We must have something with what we can fight. . . . We have never used modern artillery, it is time we did."

Finally, there is rationalisation, the intensification of labour power speeding up and all that it involves in physical exhaustion to the worker. Here the Labour Government is all essential to the successful carrying through of this. The Labour Government itself

has inscribed on its banner this magic word, which means the prospect of ever higher profits to the capitalists and ever greater unemployment and exhaustion to the workers. Some members of the Government in their enthusiasm for it even forgot that according to the Party programme it was but a means whereby extensive "reforms" would again become possible, and blurted out what in very truth it really is—a means to the restoration of capitalism. Thomas, for instance, in an article in the *Daily Mail*, May 1 of last year, asserted that :—

The State must play its part in restoring efficiency and prosperity to industries like coal and cotton by a variety of steps designed to eliminate waste and wasteful conflict . . . and to adapt business structures to the changed economic conditions of the post-war world.

How he was carrying this out Thomas frankly explained to the House of Commons in an unemployment debate on April 4 this year. Besides having conferences with the employers he pointed to conferences held with the trade unions and also to joint conferences of both sides. He proceeded :—

The House will be pleased to know that I have found no difficulty there but that on the contrary there was a frank recognition on both sides that changes and sacrifices would have to be made in order to pull the country through. (*Hansard*, col. 1679.)

The "sacrifices" for the employers are ever increasing profits. For instance, the *Economist* tables of industrial profits for the first quarter of this year show a net rise of 1.9 per cent. in the declared profits of 516 companies as compared with those declared in the same period last year ; this follows a rise of 1.4 per cent. in the profits declared in the fourth quarter of last year. The rise of the profits of 28 iron, coal and steel companies is phenomenal—96.7 per cent.—and, as the *Economist* points out, of the actual increase of £1,479,132 in this group "over £1½ millions is accounted for by changes in the net earnings of the Bolsover, Powell Duffryn, Fife Coal, and Amalgamated Anthracite Companies." The workers employed by these companies could fill volumes of description of the terrific exploitation which has made these increased profits possible.

The "sacrifices" for the workers besides this intensified exploitation are mass dismissals. On February 24 this year, 13.1 per cent. of the total insured workers were unemployed as

compared with 9.7 per cent. on May 27 last year. To put it another way, according to a Ministry of Labour Estimate on March 24 this year, there were a total of 9,888,400 insured workers in employment. This was a reduction of 53,000 on the previous month and a reduction of 312,300 on the previous year.

The "Left's" Function—Restoring Confidence

What is the attitude of the Labour Party Lefts to this last "solution" of capitalism—the Labour Government—a "solution" which is only intensifying the crisis by its policy of rationalisation, *i.e.*, increasing productivity in the face of a crisis of over-production? During the Unemployment Insurance Bill debates these Lefts exposed the real character of their "Leftism."

For instance, we have Kirkwood asserting, "I can imagine no more deliberate betrayal of election pledges than is committed in this resolution, and I defy any member of the Government from top to bottom to square this resolution with the public demand for work or maintenance," House of Commons, July 11, 1929. Yet Kirkwood still remains in the Labour Party.

Or take Wheatley. In the debate on December 2, he stated the position still more openly. He said: "Why in Heaven's name do the people of this country, election after election, vote for a House of Commons? I am beginning to wonder why they have still faith in politics. In election after election, they are asked not to adopt strike or industrial action or adopt revolutionary methods and not to listen to agitators who create confusion in society, but to settle matters reasonably, constitutionally and moderately by the Parliamentary machine. They accept your view and yet in 1929 they still put their faith in politics! And now they are reaping the reward of their innocence . . ." Wheatley like the others only got a tiny scrap of what he demanded: is he satisfied with this tiny scrap or is he as innocent as he says the workers are, when he himself continues to put his faith in Parliament—witness his peaceful occupation of a seat there—and does not turn to help and organise the strikes and other revolutionary things such as demonstrations of which he has been warned? Perhaps the workers are becoming less innocent than he makes them out to be; for they still insist on organising strikes against the express wish of the Labour Party—*e.g.*, the wool strike; they insist on taking

part in unemployed demonstrations—in spite of the express warning of the Party's organ, the *Daily Herald*. Perhaps they are beginning to put two and two together when they notice that Mr. Wheatley remains the close colleague of Mr. Maxton, who expresses his growing confidence in the need and importance of Parliament. For on December 16 in the House after pointing out that the unemployed had no control over jobs or the lack of them, he claimed that : “ It is we here who have the major responsibility and the captains of industry and so on outside. More and more it is recognised that if this failure to employ the men of our working population is to be rectified in the future, it is here that it is going to be done.”

What else is this but an effort to restore confidence in Parliamentary action, to restore confidence in the ability of the Labour Government to help the unemployed? It is not surprising, therefore, when we get J. Beckett, M.P., in the columns of the *New Leader*, January 3, writing thus : “ It cannot be too strongly emphasised that none of us likes opposing the Government, our record proves this.” Or again, W. J. Brown in speaking in the Commons on December 3 said, “ I am one of many on this side of the House who doubt not the willingness of the Government or the honesty of the Government,” or as the “ Notes of the Month ” in the *New Leader* said on January 17, in interpreting the policy of Maxton and his group : “ They still believe in the association of the I.L.P. with the Labour Party, but not if it means, as Mr. Wheatley put it, the dropping of the word ‘ Independent ’ from the title of the I.L.P.” Yes, exactly as long as they are no longer regarded as an “ independent ” group their function objectively of restoring confidence, of dispelling the disillusionment of the workers in the Labour Government would become impossible.

Indeed, is it not so clearly by their words we recognise this so-called Left Opposition as pseudo Lefts, as by their actions? Not once has one of them ever assisted in organising the workers on strike against wage cuts, more especially when directly imposed by the Labour Government; not once have they helped to organise the unemployed; not once have they organised or ever joined in the protest against the break up of unemployed demonstrations or the Labour Party boycott of the unemployed marchers.

Their Bankrupt Theories

Therefore, when we come to their positive policy as expressed in the *New Leader* for December 27, last year, as follows :—

The fact is that Mr. Thomas cannot, or will not, see that the development of the home market, the increase of the purchasing power among the masses, the undertaking of huge development schemes, and investment therein of a large amount of national money are the only hopes.

We see the hollowness of this policy. As to the development of the home market, as Lenin said in his *Imperialism*, p. 70 : “While capitalism remains itself, the excess of capital is not put aside to raise the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decrease of profits for the capitalists, but is used to increase those profits by the export of capital abroad to the backward countries,” and again as Marx pointed out, quoted by us above, “The very nature of [capitalist : H. R.] accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour and every rise in the price of labour which could seriously imperil the continual reproduction on an ever enlarging scale of the capitalist relation.” The development of the home market, e.g., by increasing the purchasing power of the people when capital is in excess is thus seen to be excluded, for as Lenin said, “In that case capitalism would not be capitalism, for in the inequalities of development and the wretched condition of the masses are the indispensable conditions, the very roots of this method of production.” In the second case where owing to a decrease in the accumulation of capital caused by “increase in the purchasing power among the masses” the self expansion of capital is checked, and labour becomes superfluous, the price of labour falls again to the level at which the surplus capital appropriated by capitalism is large enough for it to start again its process of self-expansion.

Similarly the cry of the I.L.P. for a more equitable distribution of wealth, which is basically the same demand as the development of the home market, arises out of this same misconception. It, however, contains within it the further most ridiculous conception of bourgeois economics that the process of distribution is separated entirely from the process of production, is governed by entirely different laws. But wealth, income, and capital are all the same. When called capital, it is supposed to be governed

by the immutable laws of nature ; when called income it can be banded about at the arbitrary will of the individual. *Capital* is distributed in the form of wages to the workers and becomes the *income* of the workers. To increase this income of the workers, which is the same as increasing the purchasing power of the people, it would be necessary, as we showed above, to transform the capitalist system of production before any more equitable system of distribution could be organised.

Only a Revolutionary Struggle

Thus it becomes perfectly clear that any struggle of the unemployed must be a revolutionary struggle. Further that as unemployment has now become one of the most central features of capitalism in every country throughout the world, May Day, which is the international proletariat's day of demonstration against capitalism in all its forms, will this year more than ever before have as its central slogans of struggle the revolutionary demands of the unemployed.

THE FIGHT OF THE ENGINEERING WORKERS

By J. R. SCOTT

SINCE 1924 there has been a long series of conferences between the National Joint Wages Negotiating Committee and the Engineering Employers' Federation on the question of increased wages, and many times during these years of negotiations, the engineering workers' hopes have been raised only to be dashed to the ground when the results, or rather lack of results, became known.

The demand of the unions was originally for 20s. a week advance, but at the conference held in May, 1927, the union representatives dropped the 20s. demand piece by piece ending up by pleading with Sir Allan Smith, Chairman of the Employers' Federation, to make an offer of 2s. 6d. per week increase, and they would be prepared to recommend it to a ballot vote of the membership. The pleadings fell on very deaf ears and that ended the demand for a 20s. per week increase.

In 1928 a further national application was made, this time for an advance of 8s. per week which was again rejected. Consequent upon this the unions appointed a committee to "investigate" the industry as they were confident that sections of the industry could afford to meet the demand. The findings of the Committee were boosted in the *Daily Herald*, of December 5, 1928, wherein the leading article declared that the unions had now the information and that the demand was so reasonable and justified that the employers could not refuse. But as subsequent events proved, the employers flatly refused the unions' request, and at various times since there have been further conferences to discuss the question.

The recent developments are the most illuminating of all and show the rôle of the trade union leaders as agents of capitalism and opponents of the working class. A conference of trade union

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executives took place on January 25, 1930, when the following resolution was the outcome of their considerations of the situation:—

That this conference elect a representative deputation to approach the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation, requesting them to submit our wages claim to arbitration. Failing agreement, they approach the Government to set up an inquiry on the lines of the present investigation in the cotton and iron and steel industries. Further, the deputation to particularly direct the attention of the Government to the statement of Sir Allan Smith, regarding wages and social services.

The deputation met representatives of the Engineering Employers' Federation on February 26 to consider the request to submit the wages claim to arbitration. The employers replied by stating that they could not agree to the suggestion but proposed "that before proceeding further with this question a joint deputation should be appointed to investigate, amongst other things, the working conditions and cost of manufacture in foreign countries."

The Joint Executives held a conference on March 19 to give consideration to the employers' proposals, and decided to immediately approach the Government to set up the committee of inquiry.

The employers are satisfied that the six years' national negotiations have served *their* purpose and have no fear of the committee of inquiry, but on the contrary know that the precedent established by the capitalist rationalisation Labour Government and the textile workers, *i.e.*, wage cuts, will also obtain in engineering or any other industry. Hence we have the employers and the trade union officials actively paving the way for wage cuts and worsened conditions.

This is the situation after six years' negotiations, and the above is but a very brief review of those protracted proceedings. There must be an answer to the question "How is it that such proceedings could take place?"

First of all, it must be clearly understood that the leaders in the unions are not fools. They know perfectly well the real factors governing the situation, and it is necessary to clearly realise the significance of the process of wage negotiations.

The attempts of British capitalism during the past few years to check its continuous decline and its endeavours to regain its previous pre-eminent position in the world's market by rationalising its industry, placed the engineering industry—not ship-building, iron and steel production, &c.—in somewhat of a peculiar position, in so far that the technical requirements of other industries provided a certain amount of work more or less for the engineering industry, dealing as it does with the means of production and tools. Disputes during this period, therefore, would have been bad not only for the engineering employers, but for many sections of British capitalism.

The “York Memorandum,” with its complicated procedure for the avoidance of disputes, represents the instrument which the union leaders have used to apply this policy and strangle the fighting spirit of the workers. This is clearly emphasised in the following record of cases taken to Central Conference by the A.E.U. during the past year:—

Cases submitted	..	..	..	..	..	..	26
Mutually dropped or unable to make mutual recommendation	..	..	..	..	..	..	14
Left in hands of Central Conference	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
Referred back to local or works conference	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
Withdrawn by Union	..	..	..	..	..	..	2

The conduct of these trade union leaders, their pretence at putting forward the workers' demands is, therefore, seen to be a more effective service to the capitalists and even greater treachery to the working class than the comparatively honest position of people like J. H. Thomas, who at any rate openly flaunt their alliance with the capitalist class and make not the slightest pretence of still serving the working class.

What is to be the policy in view of these circumstances? What are the demands to put forward to the employers? At the present moment the conception of a national struggle for a national programme is one which in practice will postpone indefinitely any move forward. The employers' offensive varies from district to district and factory to factory, and every one knows that in spite of the nominal national agreements existing, wages and conditions vary enormously.

Therefore, since the factory is the place to fight, factory

conditions must form the basis of the workers' demands. Resistance to speeding up and dismissals, counter-demands for the shorter working day, higher wages and better conditions should be the basis of the struggle, and all the while these factory fights must be directed towards the general raising of standards throughout the industry, so that on the basis of these factory and district fights there can be built a nation-wide movement directed towards securing increased wages.

What are to be the organisational forms to rely upon to develop the struggle? Because the factory is the point of struggle, organisation must be based on the factories. The factory committee, the development of a new revolutionary shop delegate movement, establishment of factory groups of members of the Minority Movement must be the organisational weapon in this fight. There must be no more sectionalising according to union card, and no longer must the unorganised worker be treated as a blackleg. The whole policy of the unions since the war has been such as to drive workers desirous of struggle against capitalism out of the union ranks. In addition, the present policy and structure of trade unionism has nothing to offer the younger workers to-day. Years ago, undoubtedly, benefits were an advantage to offer workers when joining a trade union, but to-day workers look to a trade union as an organisation to improve working conditions. But the whole policy of trade unionism to-day is entirely contrary to that, consequently this type of trade unionism is useless to workers. Therefore, Factory Committees must be elected, representing all the workers irrespective of any division. In this connection it must be remembered that the engineering unions shut their eyes to the women workers, yet there are over 180,000 women workers in this industry. The old theory that these women have no right in industry and that they ought to be at home looking after their husbands and children is completely exploded. The employers attempt to use these women to lower the general rate of wages, and it is our duty to give every assistance to these women to organise in the factory committees and to fight for equal pay for equal work in all circumstances. These factory committees must be the permanent organs uniting our forces in the factories, but when a dispute

is pending, a special organ is required which must have one objective only, that of winning the strike. This must be a Committee of Action, elected by a mass meeting covering all sections of the workers and composed of workers elected for their fighting capabilities. Both Factory Committees and Committees of Action can only function if they adopt the policy of the Minority Movement. There is no half-way house, no other choice. It means going with the trade union bureaucracy into the arms of capitalism, or rallying to the revolutionary policy of the Minority Movement leading the day-to-day struggle, clearly recognising the need for new methods, new organisation and new leadership.

This does not mean that the Minority Movement is opposed to trade unionism, but it is irreconcilably and beyond question opposed to the type of trade unionism which turns the unions into the instruments of the capitalists and defeating the workers' struggles and lowering the standards of existence. Therefore, the Minority Movement is opposed to the whole policy of the Trades Union Congress and the reactionary leadership of its affiliated unions. Against this policy the Minority Movement calls upon the workers to support a revolutionary trade unionism standing for everyday struggles in the factories against capitalist rationalisation and for better conditions. We cannot be indentified with the recruiting campaign of the T.U.C., and we tell every worker perfectly plainly that to join the existing unions in the engineering industry and expect the leadership to fight for its interests is to make an enormous mistake. The first duty of such workers is to enrol in the Minority Movement, to agitate for the formation of factory committees and to press forward the struggle for better conditions. The only reason for joining the existing unions, including the A.E.U., is in order to conduct a determined struggle against the bureaucracy which is the ally of the employers, and to those workers ready to participate in such a struggle it is necessary for them to join the union in order to defend the interests of the workers by ruthlessly attacking the bureaucracy.

What, then, is the present situation? The position of the employers, like that of the whole employing class, has developed considerably. The whole of capitalism is now menaced by a

world crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Rationalisation has shown that it provides no solution to the fundamental problem and that it cannot arrest the decline of capitalism. On the contrary, it intensifies and accelerates this decline. The United States and Germany, the two classic countries of capitalist rationalisation, with now five million and three million unemployed respectively, have experienced a terrific slump in production and stand face to face with the biggest crises in their history. In Britain, rationalisation now more and more takes the form of the intensification of workers' labour and the grandiose schemes of reorganisation and modernisation of technical equipment are more and more giving way to organised speeding up and slave driving. This we all know from our own experiences in the factories. The crisis will now have a very marked effect on the engineering industry in Britain. The savage competition which can be expected from the United States, particularly in the motor and electrical sections, and the general falling off of demands for new equipment means that the period of fairly full employment is now closing and that mass dismissals can be expected.

Take the reference to rationalisation in the motor industry in the pamphlet written by J. Tanner and published by the Minority Movement in September, 1929:—

It is estimated that in about two years the saturation of the home market will be complete and the English manufacturers will be compelled to extend their overseas market in competition with America. The prospects of them doing this successfully are not rosy. In fact, the decline in the industry has already begun, the production of motor vehicles and chassis was estimated at 213,000 in 1927, and 211,000 in 1928. Exports also fell, from 36,325 in 1927 to 33,000 in 1928, and the value decreased accordingly. The export of motor vehicles in Great Britain in the first six months of 1928 was only 15,517 as compared with the export of 253,895 vehicles by the U.S.A. As these figures show it will only require a further increase in the American exports of 9.5 per cent. to wipe out the British motor exports entirely! Steps are already being taken by the motor industry to meet this threat. There are over fifty models of private cars produced in this country at the present time, and it is suggested that twelve or so would suffice. A move in this direction is necessary to compete with Ford and the General Motors of America. This would mean, if carried out, another company similar to Austin, Morris or Singer, and all the other forty odd firms could close down.

At the end of May, 1929, there were 12,587 registered unemployed in this industry. When rationalisation is more generally introduced "in order to recover lost markets" we shall be faced with a similar position to that of the cotton operatives, a larger unemployment problem and an attack on the wages and conditions.

Now look at the front page article in the *Evening Standard*, March 6, 1930. "Big motor industry plans—millions involved in merger plans—British car push—Home and Foreign Markets." This relates to "certain firms in the Coventry area," and states that an important scheme of £2,000,000 capital is being planned. It believes that there is no possibility of Morris or Austin joining the combine, which if it becomes "an accomplished fact may challenge these firms as well as the big *American concerns*, in both home and world markets." Obviously, according to these quotations, things are moving rapidly, and with the coming into existence of such a combine, many workers in the Coventry area, and elsewhere for that matter, will be declared "redundant."

The number of unemployed in the industry is beginning to rise. December, 1928, recorded 57,060 unemployed and December, 1929, 60,290 (*L.R.D. Monthly Circular*); a quotation from the *A.E.U. Monthly Journal* would not be out of place here:—

January, 1929	..	10,793 unemployed	5.18 per cent. of membership
September "	..	11,815 "	5.67 " "
December "	..	12,356 "	5.90 " "
January, 1930	..	13,644 "	6.54 " "
February "	..	13,805 "	6.64 " "
March "	..	15,117 "	7.23 " "

What then are the trade union leaders going to do in this situation, with their parrot cry of "trade may improve, let's mark time and get all in the unions"? In fact, Swales, at a meeting of A.E.U. members, on February 24, 1930, declared that the unions had been "marking time during the last eight years" preserving its forces, trying to build the union in the hope that trade would improve.

This question can be clearly answered by examining their attitude towards the Labour Government. This Government, whose very existence is an indication of the weakness of British capitalism, got into office on an election programme which was nothing more or less than a programme of intensified rationalisation. The trade union leaders are bound to this Government and

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their political allegiance is the determining factor in regard to their every-day policy. These trade union leaders stand for capitalist rationalisation. This means that in the period of capitalist crisis they stand for strike breaking, wage cutting and the lowering of the workers' standard of living. Those among them who use socialist phrases, who speak of struggle in words, but by their action support the policy of collaboration with the capitalists, are the most dangerous enemies of the working class. It is necessary to make this point very clear because many workers are yet under the impression that some engineering union leaders, particularly in the A.E.U., are opposed to Mondism and are willing to lead the struggle against capitalism. The process of wage negotiations over this long period is sufficient evidence to prove my contention.

Why is it that these leaders act in this manner? It is precisely because they are not revolutionaries. They have no faith in the working class, they have no desire to end the capitalist system and they know that when the working class offer resistance to speeding up, against longer hours and puts forward demands for better standards of living, this action constitutes a blow at the very existence of capitalism; the trade union agents of capitalism in their frantic endeavours to defend it are forced to trick and smash down every indication of the rising wave of struggle. Therefore, every engineering worker should resolve to make an end of all the humbug, all the conscious deception of the negotiating method and the politics which it represents, and to turn his attention to the struggle in the factories as the only means of obtaining better conditions.

FOLDED ARMS!

By REG. GROVES

FOUR years ago this month of May the General Strike began and ended. May, 1926, began with the mobilisation of class against class, but within nine days the betrayal was consummated; the most powerful and profound event in the history of the British workers was broken from within, and the courage, spirit and heroism of those nine days were sacrificed to capitalism. But this betrayal, tragic as it seemed at the time, closed one chapter to open another. That new chapter in the history of the British working class now rapidly unfolds itself before our eyes.

The purpose of this article is not to deal with the events of May, 1926, in detail, but to take the idea of the General Strike, interpreted as a strike with "folded arms," to see when, where and how it arose; to survey briefly its attempted use by the Chartists; and also to see how the "*folded arms*" conception of the General Strike—either as a weapon to win economic demands, or as a weapon in the struggle for power—has been demonstrated to be utterly false by the events of 1926.

Benbow and the General Strike

It was in the eighteen-thirties that this idea of the General Strike emerged with consistency. It did so partly through the activities of William Benbow and partly through the growth, during those years, of national working-class organisations.

There were several causes which led to the development of workers' national organisations; experience had proved the weakness and isolation of the craft and district trade unions; these lessons had been reinforced by defeat in many sectional struggles; there was also the growing tendency of the employers to combine; all these factors contributed to build up a recognition of the importance of national trade unions and national strikes.

Throughout these years of movement among the workers for national organisation to carry through national action, Benbow's conception of the General Strike was preached; it spread with amazing rapidity.

Benbow's conception was of a general stoppage of work; he claimed that the workers had "only to say we must be free" and "they would be so two days afterwards." Benbow held that violence was not necessary; Benbow would never "recommend violence of any kind." He wanted the workers simply to dress themselves in their Sunday clothes and take a month's holiday. This conception Benbow developed still further in his pamphlet, *The Grand National Holiday*, urging the workers to set up local committees to organise the holiday and see that violence was avoided.

The theory outlined above became amazingly popular among the workers; and the rise of the various *national* unions of the workers naturally increased the support for the "National Holiday." This theory of the General Strike was carried a step further forward by the Left Wing of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in its declaration that the delegate conference of trades was a better form of government than parliament, and that it represented the government of the workers as against the government of the employers.

But the pacifism inherent in the theory of Benbow remained. *Moral force was to be looked to as the power that would decide the issue between the classes.* The idea that it would be impossible for a workers' government and a capitalist government to exist peacefully together was not considered. Appeal to armed power and decision of the issues by the use of guns and troops they did not include in their range of possibilities. It was taken for granted that the issues would be settled simply by the obvious superiority of the new form of government over the old being recognised throughout the land, but should pressure be needed that would be provided by the ever-increasing mass support for the National Holiday—which they regarded as being the peaceful way to power.

Challenge Voiced by Harney

These conceptions existed without challenge until the time of Chartism. The Chartist Convention of 1839—faced by the rejection of the Petition—discussed "ulterior measures"; one of these was the "National Holiday" of Benbow, called by the Chartists the "sacred week" or sometimes the "sacred month."

Benbow emerged again; his pamphlet sold even more widely than before.

The advocates of moral force in the Convention supported the General Strike; they regarded it as a peaceful weapon. Their point of view was challenged by the revolutionary elements: George Julian Harney—Secretary of the London Democratic Association, and later the close friend of Marx and Engels—declared that, *to be successful the general strike meant "nothing less than civil war."*

In the *London Democrat*, for May 4, 1839, Harney showed how impossible it was for the workers, on their low wages, to provide themselves with food to carry them through the strike, and described how they would be faced with starvation after the first few days, and so be driven to take food from the rich. This would bring them into conflict with the military and, he asked, "what would this be but insurrection and civil war?" He continued:—

I should not object to this plan, but that those who have been its loudest advocates have *at the same time* denounced the arming of the people. Suppose such a conflict, such as I have imagined, to take place in some petty district, the people, being unarmed, would suffer a murderous defeat. The news of the slaughter of the people in this one district would fly like wildfire throughout the country; the effect would be that the rest of the people (dispirited with hunger and but too conscious that they too were unarmed) would be compelled to return to their taskmasters soliciting again to be enslaved. . .

What then should the people do? These are not the times to be nice about mere words; the fact is that there is *but one mode of obtaining the Charter* and that is by *Insurrection*.

Here, in an undeveloped form, is the first challenge, from the revolutionary point of view, to the theory that "folded arms" can defeat the power of capitalism. Here is an awareness that the General Strike means preparing to meet the troops, the police and the armed forces of the ruling class—which is precisely what the "moral force" supporters of the "National Holiday" did not intend to do.

The Chartist Strike

In the year 1842 the great "Plug Plot" took place; this was the nearest approach to the General Strike dreamt of and advocated by Benbow. The strike, which originated in Ashton

and Hyde against a reduction in wages, spread rapidly to other parts of Lancashire, to Yorkshire, Staffordshire, the Potteries, and to parts of Wales and Scotland. Benbow's dream of the workers in their Sunday clothes, on holiday, was rudely shattered. Hungry, shouting and grim bands of strikers invaded the various towns, carrying such banners as "They that perish by the sword are better than they that perish by hunger." For days Manchester and other towns were in a state of siege; shops were shut, factories invaded, and the workers brought out—willingly or unwillingly—to join in the strike. Trains were stopped and frequent conflicts took place between the strikers and the Government forces. In Preston and Blackburn the troops, who were poured into the strike areas by the Government, fired upon the crowds, killing six workers.

The delegate conference of the strikers decided to turn the strike into one for the Charter; all work was to cease until the "Charter became the law of the land." The winning of the Charter could only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie—by the transformation of the strike into an insurrectionary struggle for power, but the strikers' decision was based, not upon a recognition of the need for revolutionary struggle but upon the belief that the General Strike would compel the ruling class to abdicate from rulership. "Never," said the *Northern Star*, "for one moment let it be forgotten by any Chartist, that, to be successful, they must be peaceful"; the Chartist Association issued a manifesto:—

Englishmen! The blood of your brethren reddens the streets of Preston and Blackburn and the murderers thirst for more. Be firm, be courageous, be men. Peace, law and order have prevailed on our side; let them be revered until your brethren in Scotland, Wales and Ireland are informed of your resolution and when a universal holiday prevails, which will be the case in eight days, then *of what use will bayonets be against public opinion?*

The Government, however, far from surrendering its power, turned all its attention to repressive measures; whilst the factory owners formed themselves into volunteer forces of "specials." The strike, however, did not develop further towards insurrection than a number of isolated conflicts between the strikers and the police and troops. In September the workers resumed without

having carried the Charter into law and without having prevented the wage reductions.

So the theory of the "Sacred Month," of the "National Holiday" was tried; Harney's analysis of 1839 was vindicated in 1842, and it was demonstrated that "folded arms" is not the method by which the workers can achieve class power.

The Syndicalist Theory

The "folded arms" theory does not re-appear as the theory of a movement until the years 1911-1914. These were years of developing "industrial unrest." The principal sections of the working class were engaged in tremendous struggles with the employers; faced with serious decline the ruling class used every method to defeat the workers and the State was used more and more in these disputes; this and the discrediting of Parliamentary action, through the failure of the Parliamentary Labour Party, drove the workers increasingly to action on the industrial field. Out of this rising wave of militancy arose the Syndicalist movement, with its doctrines of "direct action" and its advocacy of the General Strike. The development of this powerful movement was turned aside by the war.

The Syndicalists were still under the illusion that the General Strike could achieve the emancipation of the workers. During the "Don't Shoot" trial an article in the *Syndicalist* explained:—

The violence that the Syndicalists advocate is a strike of men united in such a powerful and solid industrial union that there will be no scabs for the troops to protect. . . . We think that nothing will conduce to a peaceful transfer of capital from the capitalist to the community as the realisation on the part of the capitalist that the Syndicalists have it in their power to annihilate their profits by withdrawing the workers.—(*The Syndicalist*, March, 1912.)

The increasing use of troops in industrial disputes forced the Syndicalists to face up to the question of fighting the capitalist state, but beyond appeals to the soldiers "Not to shoot," little was done. There was clearly no awareness on the part of the Syndicalists that to get power the workers must build a revolutionary party that would prepare for insurrection.

The General Strike

With the end of the war came the renewal of the struggle, with its political character evidencing more clearly. From "Black

Friday" onwards the forces of the working class were moving towards mass action to meet the capitalist-offensive, seeking ways, means and weapons to smash the capitalist front. From the end of the war onwards the employers and their State machine were expressing in words and deeds their conviction that the only hope for them lay in the driving down of the standards of living of the British working class. Upon this basis of starvation wages the existence of British capitalism depended. Any challenge to this basis meant a challenge to the whole capitalist class and to the rule of capitalism. Such a challenge the bourgeoisie would meet by the use of the whole forces of the State. Thus the struggle for bread and butter becomes a struggle for class power, and behind the nominal issues on which struggles were waged lay the fundamental issue—*Which class was to rule?*

During the Nine Days the General Council did all it could to weaken and to hold back the strikers and to disguise from them its real character. Day by day they announced, through the *British Worker*, that "this is an industrial dispute; the General Council does not seek to challenge the constitution." The Government, on the other hand, mobilised all its forces. Troops and armoured cars menaced the workers of London; in Hull, Middlesbrough and elsewhere they were used to break the strike; the police batoned workers, broke up strike meetings and arrested the most militant. To this, in spite of their leaders, the workers replied by action; scab 'buses were stopped by huge crowds of workers and turned back, scab trams were stoned, and in many cases overturned; mass pickets were organised to prevent blacklegging and Workers' Defence Corps formed. Clearly within a short time the General Council would have lost its control over the workers, and the struggle, under a new leadership, would have gone forward to open civil war.

Then came the betrayal; the surrender by the General Council. When the full meaning of this was known there was a widespread wave of fury among the workers; from all parts came resolutions of anger, of protest and of decision to fight on.

We cannot now deal with the rally of May 13; with the efforts of many local committees to link up and fight on; with the end of the strike; and with the subsequent struggle of the

miners. For us the question is—is the General Strike still a weapon in the struggle of the working class and if so how has its form been changed by the events of 1926 ?

Never Again ?

The Labour leaders united in declaring, after the General Strike, that it could never happen again—that the weapon of the General Strike had been finally discredited by the events of May, 1926.

The reason for these statements can be found in the fact that the events of May, 1926, demonstrated that every industrial struggle of the workers is, in the period of capitalist decline, a revolutionary struggle; that a fight against one section of the capitalist class is a fight against the whole capitalist class raising the issues of class power, and raising the question of the fight against the capitalist State. It is no longer possible for the workers to fight for improved conditions or even to fight against worsened conditions without challenging the basis of capitalist rule.

For this reason Labour leaders will never use the General Strike weapon again. May, 1926, presented the alternative to the Labour leaders of revolutionary struggle for power or class collaboration with the bosses in reorganising capitalism on the basis of worsened condition for the workers; they chose class collaboration. It showed the need for a revolutionary party of the working class to link up the various struggles of the working class and lead them against the capitalist state.

The weapon of the General Strike remains a weapon in the class struggle; the events of 1926 killed the "folded arms" illusion for ever. In future it can only be used as part of the revolutionary struggle of the working class for power. In this sense and in this sense alone can we regard the General Strike as a weapon in our fight for emancipation; the events of May should be to us not only a lesson in this respect but an inspiration to us in the mighty conflicts of to-day.

WAR AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

An Answer to P. Kiyevsky

By N. LENIN

[This important article of Lenin's was recently published for the first time in the periodical "*Proletarskaya Revolutsia*" ("Proletarian Revolution") issued by the Lenin Institute in Moscow. It has been specially translated for the LABOUR MONTHLY, together with the editorial note of the "*Proletarskaya Revolutsia*" from the German. The page references, where not otherwise marked, are to the first Russian edition of Lenin's works.]

WE publish below a draft by Lenin of a criticism of an article by P. Kiyevsky (J. Piatakov) entitled "The Proletariat and the Self-Determination of the Nations." Lenin wrote it in August or September, 1916. A detailed criticism of Comrade Piatakov's standpoint was given by Lenin in an essay entitled "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," which was published for the first time in 1924. This article was intended for No. 3 of the *Sozial Demokratischen Sammelbuch* (*Social Democratic Symposium*) at the beginning of 1917 together with Kiyevsky's article, but the 1917 Revolution brought to an end Lenin's exile and also the publication abroad of this periodical.

The discussion on the right of self-determination of nations formed part of the theoretical struggle which was going on amongst the *Zimmerwald* Lefts in the year 1916. The significance of this struggle lay in the fact that it involved "a fundamental examination of the conceptions which must form the theoretical basis of the Third International." (Lenin.) Amongst Lenin's opponents in this discussion on the right of self-determination of nations and on the slogan of "Disarmament" were German, Dutch, Scandinavian and Polish Left social democrats who adhered to the *Zimmerwald* Left (Karl Radek, R. Luxemburg, A. Pannekoek). At the beginning of October, 1916, Lenin wrote to Schlyapnikov to the effect that not only was the continuation of the established tactical line up for discussion:

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but also the clearing away of fresh absurdities such as the denial of democracy (with which is connected disarmament, the denial of the right of self-determination, the theoretically false denial of the defence of the fatherland "in general," and vacillation on the general question of the character and role of the State). (Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. xix, p. 273.)

Lenin was compelled in his struggle for the creation of the Third International to defend the principle of revolutionary Marxism, not only on the national question but also on other fundamental questions of the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution. Lenin's opponents consisted not only of the "Left" parties of Western Europe, who were at that time in process of development from social democracy to Leninism by the "Spartacus" road, but also of a section of the Bolsheviks. In the article "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism" Lenin declared that "Kiyevski's article reflected the vacillations which could be observed in some of the foreign circles of our party since 1915." The representative of these "vacillations" was the Bukharin-Piatkov group which already had come forward at the end of February, 1915, with its own programmatic resolution at the conference of the foreign sections of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Russia. This group proclaimed in Lenin's words, a "new Bolshevism," a "Bolshevism for Western Europe."

This article is of interest because it brings the discussion of secondary questions back to the fundamental questions—on the problem of democracy in the epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. To a certain extent it represents an epitome of a whole series of Lenin's works on the national question and on the question of disarmament ("The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Self-Determination of Nations," "The Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination," "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," "On the Slogan of Disarmament," "The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution," &c.), even though it was written earlier than some of these articles.

The problem of democracy is formulated in this article as a question on the one hand of the necessity of the retention of a minimum programme until the transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat, and on the other hand as a question of proletarian democracy after the conquest of power. In the thesis "The

Socialist Revolution and the Right of Self-determination of the Nations" Lenin wrote :—

Just as it is impossible for socialism to be victorious without realising full democracy, so also the proletariat is not able to prepare itself for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it conducts an all-sided, determined and revolutionary struggle for democracy. (Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. xix, p. 38. See also translation of article in LABOUR MONTHLY, July, 1928, p. 422.)

Thus, Lenin comprehended these two questions under one formula.

The problem of democracy in this case is on the one hand the problem of the democratic reserves of the proletarian revolution, on the other the problem of the socialist transformation or metamorphosis of the non-proletarian masses through proletarian democracy.

The problem of the democratic reserves was formulated in 1915 on the question of the possibility of national revolutionary wars. Are national wars for freedom possible in the epoch of imperialism? Two programmatic documents diametrically opposed to each other are devoted to this question by the two chief groups of the Third International then still in embryo. The Bolsheviks maintained in their pamphlet *War and Socialism* (August, 1915) that a war on the part of Persia, India, or China "can even nowadays be a progressive bourgeois nationalist war of emancipation." (Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. xviii, p. 254, German edition.) The German Lefts, that is to say the "International" Group (Spartacusbund) declared in point 5 of the introductory sentences of their document, written by Rosa Luxemburg in January, 1916, that: "In this era of unbridled imperialism there can no longer be national wars."

Rosa Luxemburg accordingly ignored the national revolutionary movements, and in this way ignored the most powerful reserves of the proletarian revolution. On this question Kiyevsky sided not with Lenin but with Rosa Luxemburg. Like Karl Radek he did not understand the significance of the democratic movements in the epoch of imperialism. As against Kiyevsky's undialectic formulation of the question of democracy, Lenin in this article formulates it dialectically :—

Capitalism in general, and imperialism in particular, make

democracy an illusion. But at the same time capitalism engenders strivings towards democracy amongst the masses, creates democratic machinery, sharpens the antagonism between imperialism which denies democracy and the masses who are striving after democracy.

From that Lenin drew the conclusion :—

The Marxist solution of the question of democracy consists in this, that the proletariat in its class struggle against the bourgeoisie must utilise all the machinery of democracy, all democratic strivings against the bourgeoisie in order to prepare in advance for the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin emphasises that one must utilise democratic movements and democratic machinery. Both these points were directed against the Lefts who not only denied the significance of the national and peasant movement for the proletarian revolution, but also on the question of the utilisation of Parliament went astray along the road towards anarchism. They put class action outside Parliament in opposition to Parliamentarism and held that it was impossible to combine revolutionary Parliamentarism with mass action. These conceptions were represented by Pannekoek, Gorter and others. In his pamphlet *Infantile Sickness of Left-Communism*, Lenin in 1920 supplied the criticism of this ultra Left "Boycottism."

The under-estimation of the significance of the democratic movements by the followers of Rosa Luxemburg resulted from the conception of the socialist revolution as a "pure" social revolution, produced by the common action of the proletariat of all countries without the support of the non-proletarian masses. They thought of the social revolution as a single event. The necessity for a period of transition was entirely lacking from their conception. Equally lacking was the conception of proletarian democracy as the State in the period of transition. This was expressed in the thesis of the *Gazeta Robotnitsa* on "Imperialism and National Oppression" (written by Radek) in which all mention of the question of the limits of the State under socialism is omitted ; for according to him there would be one single "socialist civilisation." This side of the Luxemburg conception of the proletarian revolution came to the surface most clearly in the year 1916 in N. Bukharin's articles on the State.

In contradiction to those from whose field of view had dis-

appeared the protracted process of the socialist transformation of the village and the overcoming of capitalism which small peasant economy inevitably engendered, Lenin, already at that time, was saying in his writings that this period was inevitable, and that democracy as a State form would disappear "only when the final victory had been reached, the final consolidation of socialism into full Communism." (Lenin : *Collected Works*, Vol. xix, p. 155.) For the victory of socialism to be final, for socialism to be consolidated, it was necessary not only that the bourgeoisie should be suppressed and their attacks on the proletarian state beaten off, but also a protracted work of education amongst the non-proletarian working masses. The proletariat cannot build up the socialist State and socialist production :—

except by drawing the whole mass of toilers, the proletariat, semi-proletariat and small peasantry into democratic organisation of their ranks and their forces, and into participation in the State. (Lenin.)

Lenin in this article lays bare not only these faults of Bukharin and Piatakov on these fundamental questions, but also the incorrectness of their methodology. Precisely in this article directed against Kiyevsky, Lenin reveals :—

The reasons for all his curious logical mistakes for his whole confusion, not only on the question of self-determination, but also on the question of the Defence of the Fatherland, on the question of separation, on the question of "Rights" in general. . . .

Kiyevsky's most important logical mistake consists in his assertion that "Democracy cannot be realised under capitalism" because "imperialism means the denial of democracy." Kiyevsky understood just as little as the "Economists" of 1900 how to solve marxistically the problem of the connection of "Politics" and "Economics." He fell into an "imperialist economism." His under-estimation of the significance of "Politics," of the significance of the struggle for "Rights," of the struggle for democracy is connected with results because he does not see behind the fact of the trampling under feet of all rights, of the *open* denial of democracy, the *real essence* of the phenomena, viz., the growth of democratic strivings of the masses and the sharpening of the "antagonism between imperialism which denies democracy and the masses who are striving after democracy." Kiyevsky's method is the methodology of the petty bourgeoisie,

which beside itself with the horrors of the war, is so depressed that it ceases to reflect and to analyse.

The crisis produced by the imperialist war "hardened and enlightened" the proletariat, but "alarmed and prostrated" the petty bourgeoisie. Lenin exposed these petty bourgeois vacillations in the ranks of those who were to form the Third International. This article is one of those documents which testifies to Lenin's gigantic work in the creation of the theoretical foundations of the Third International.

N. Lenin: Answer to P. Kiyevsky

Some the war alarmed and prostrated, others it hardened and enlightened—like every crisis in the life of a man or the history of nations.

One recognises this truth also in socialist thought on the war. It is one thing to go deeper into the reasons and the significance of the imperialist war on the foundation of highly developed capitalism, into the tasks of social democratic tactics in connection with the war, into the causes of the crisis of Social Democracy, &c., but another thing to let one's brain be overwhelmed with the war and under the burden of the fearful impressions and painful consequences and character of the war to cease to think and to analyse.

One of these *forms* of the suppression or repression of human thought by the war is the contemptuous attitude of "imperialist economism" to democracy. Kiyevsky does not see that this repression, this *fearfulness*, this abandonment of all analysis of the war runs like a red thread throughout his productions. What is the sense of talking about the defence of the Fatherland with all this barbarous slaughter before us? What is the sense of talking about the rights of nations when the utmost suppression prevails everywhere. How can there be any talk of self-determination, the "independence" of nations, when one sees what has been done with "independent" Greece? Is there any purpose at all in speaking of "Right," or to think of it, if everywhere all rights are trodden underfoot in the interests of the military? What purpose is served by speaking or thinking of a republic, if in this war not even the slightest, but absolutely no, difference

exists between democratic republics and the most reactionary of monarchies ?

Kiyevsky becomes very angry if one suggests to him that he has let himself be intimidated and driven to a denial of democracy in general. He gets angry and retorts: I am in no way against democracy but only against a democratic demand which I hold to be "bad." But however angry Kiyevsky may be about it, however much he assures us that he is certainly not "against" democracy, yet his conclusions, or rather, to be more precise, the unbroken series of *mistakes* in his conclusions, prove the contrary.

The defence of the Fatherland is a lie in an imperialist war, but in no way in a democratic or revolutionary war. Talk of "right" during the war, is ludicrous for every war substitutes for right direct, immediate might, but because of that one should not forget that democratic and revolutionary wars have occurred in history, and certainly will occur again in the future, which replace right and democracy by might and yet in their results have served the cause of democracy and consequently also of socialism. The example of Greece appears to "refute" all self-determination of nations, but this example—if one is ready to reflect on it, to analyse and examine it, and not be intimidated by a mere torrent of words, and not let oneself be alarmed by the terrible impressions of the war—is not one jot more weighty or convincing than the mockery of the idea of the republic, seen in the fact that during the war, the most democratic republics, not only France but also the United States, Portugal and Switzerland, produced precisely the same arbitrary rule of the military as in Russia.

It is a fact that the imperialist war wiped out the difference between republic and monarchy, but to conclude from that that one must reject the republic or adopt a contemptuous attitude towards it shows that one has let oneself be intimidated by the war, let one's thoughts be overwhelmed by the horrors of the war. Such was precisely the judgment of many of the adherents of the slogan "Disarmament" (Roland Holst) such as the Swiss youth and Scandinavian Lefts, &c. How can one speak of the revolutionary utilisation of the army or the militia, if in this war there is no difference between the republican militia and the standing army of the monarchy, if militarism everywhere commits such atrocities ?

Here we have one single train of ideas throughout, one and the same theoretical and practical political mistake, which Kiyevsky does not see and which he commits literally at every step in his work. He believes that he is polemising only against self-determination, he wants to polemise only against self-determination, but the result is—against his will and against his intention, and that is the curious thing about it—the result is that he quotes not a single argument that one could not adduce with just as much justification against democracy in general.

The actual reasons for all his curious logical mistakes, for all his confusion not only on the question of self-determination but also on the question of the Defence of the Fatherland, on the question of separation or the question of “rights” in general, consists in the fact that his thinking has been overwhelmed by the war, that in consequence of this mood of depression the relationship of Marxism to Democracy in general has been completely misrepresented.

Imperialism is highly developed capitalism ; imperialism is progressive ; imperialism is a denial of democracy ; “therefore” democracy “is not to be realised” under capitalism. The imperialist war is a crying violation of all democracy, both in the backward monarchical countries and in the progressive republics ; therefore, why this talk about “rights” (that is to say about democracy) ? In opposition to the imperialist war one can “only” put socialism ; the “way out” is only socialism ; accordingly it is a deception or an illusion, or an obscuring, a postponement, &c., of the slogan of the socialist revolution to include democratic slogans in the minimum programme, that is to say under capitalism.

Although it is not recognised by Kiyevsky, nevertheless it is this which is the actual source of all his false conclusions. This is his most important logical error which, precisely because it lies at the bottom of everything, and is not recognised by the author, at every step bursts out like a bad bicycle tyre—now on the question of the Defence of the Fatherland, now on the question of separation, now in the sentence on “rights.” In this excellent sentence (excellent as far as the profound contempt of “rights” and the misunderstanding of things is concerned) he says, there will be no talk here of rights, but of the destruction of a century-old servitude.

To write such a sentence means in fact that one does not understand the relationship between capitalism and democracy, between socialism and democracy.

Capitalism in general and imperialism in particular make democracy an illusion. But at the same time capitalism engenders democratic strivings amongst the masses, creates democratic machinery, sharpens the antagonism between imperialism which denies democracy and the masses who are striving after democracy. Capitalism and imperialism cannot be overthrown by democratic changes however ideal they may be, but only through an economic revolution; but the proletariat which does not train itself in the struggle for democracy, is not in a position to carry through an economic revolution. One cannot be victorious over capitalism *if one does not take possession of the banks*; if one does not abolish *private property* in the means of production; but these revolutionary measures cannot be carried, except by bringing the whole people into the organisation of a democratic administration of the means of production torn from the hands of the bourgeoisie, except by getting the whole mass of the toilers, the proletariat, semi-proletariat and small peasantry, drawn into organising their ranks and their forces on a democratic basis, into participation in the State. The imperialist war is so to speak a threefold negation of democracy: (a) every war substitutes might for right; (b) imperialism is in general a negation of democracy; (c) the imperialist war makes republic and monarchy similar to one another, but the origin, the growth of the socialist insurrection against imperialism is *inseparably* bound up with the growth of democratic resistance and revolt. Socialism leads to the dying away of *every* State, consequently also of every democracy; but Socialism cannot be realised except through the dictatorship of the proletariat which unites force against the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, against a minority of the population together with an unrestricted development of democracy, *i.e.*, of the really equal, really general, participation of the whole mass of the population in all State affairs and in all the complicated questions of the liquidation of capitalism.

It is just in these contradictions that Kiyevsky has got entangled, inasmuch as he has forgotten the teachings of Marxism on democracy. The war has, speaking metaphorically, so over-

whelmed his thinking that he substitutes for all thinking the agitational phrase "Get out from imperialism" just as one substitutes the phrase "Get out from the colonies" for the analysis as to what precisely, economically and politically, the "departure of the civil peoples" from the colonies would mean.

The Marxist solution of the question of democracy consists in this that the proletariat in its class struggle must utilise all the machinery of democracy, all democratic strivings against the bourgeoisie in order to prepare in advance for the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, to prepare for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. That is no easy matter, and to the "economists" and Tolstoyans, &c., it frequently appeared just such an unjustifiable concession to the "bourgeoisie" and to opportunism as the defence of self-determination of the nations "in the epoch of finance capital" does to Kiyevsky. Marxism teaches that "the struggle against opportunism" carried on by abstaining from utilising the democratic machinery of capitalist society created by the bourgeoisie and misused by it, is a complete capitulation to opportunism.

The slogan of *civil war* supplies socialism with the quickest way out of the imperialist war and the relation of our struggle against this war with the struggle against opportunism. Only this slogan gives a correct estimation of the special character of the war period (the war drags on in length and threatens to become a whole "war epoch") and a correct estimation of the whole character of our activity in contrast to opportunism with its pacifism, its legalism, its accommodation to its "particular" bourgeoisie. But, in addition, the civil war is openly a war which must be *democratically* organised of the masses of the poor population against the minority of the possessors.

Civil war is also war; consequently, it must inevitably put might in place of right. But force exercised in the name of the interests and rights of the majority of the population assumes another character; it tramples underfoot the "rights" of the exploiters, of the bourgeoisie, it is *not to be realised* without a democratic organisation of the army and the "hinterland." The civil war forcibly expropriates at one blow, in the first place, the banks, the factories, the railways, the large landed estates,

&c. But precisely in order to expropriate all that, it is necessary to carry through the election of all officials by the people, the election of officers by the people, and the *complete fusion* of the army which is leading the war against the bourgeoisie with the mass of the population; further, there must be complete democracy in the disposal of the means of existence, of the production and distribution of products, &c. The aim of the civil war is the conquest of the banks, factories, works, &c., the removal of every possibility of resistance by the bourgeoisie, the destruction of *its* troops. But this aim is impossible to achieve, either from the purely military, or economic, or political standpoint, without a simultaneous introduction and extension of democracy (which develops of itself in the course of such a war) amongst *our* troops and *our* "hinterland." We say now to the masses (and the masses feel instinctively that we are right when we say it to them), "You are being deceived, the war is being conducted in the interests of imperialist capitalism and is cloaked with grand slogans about democracy. You must conduct a *truly* democratic war *against* the bourgeoisie for the actual realisation of democracy and of socialism, and you will lead such a war." The present war unites and "fuses" the peoples into coalitions by means of power and financial dependence. We in our civil war against the bourgeoisie will unite and fuse our people, *not* through the power of the rouble or by force, but through *voluntary* agreement, through the solidarity of the toilers against the exploiters. The proclamation of equal rights for all nations became a deception with the bourgeoisie, with us it will be a truth which will facilitate and hasten the winning of all nations for our cause. Without the nations being truly democratically inter-related—and consequently without freedom of separation for States—the civil war of the world's toiling masses against the bourgeoisie is impossible.

Utilise bourgeois democracy for socialist and consequently democratic organisation of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and against opportunism! There is no other way. Any other "way out" is no way out. Marxism, just as actual life, knows no other way. The free separation and unity of nations is a part of it, we must not depart from this, we must not fear that "purely" economic tasks will thus be overshadowed.

The World of Labour

U.S.A.

March 6 and the Struggle against Unemployment

THE greatest outpouring of workers under revolutionary guidance ever known in America occurred on March 6, International Unemployment Day. In at least thirty-eight cities mass meetings and parades were held, which were frequently carried directly into the city halls. In New York, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Milwaukee, San Francisco, Seattle, and other industrial centres, throngs totalling several hundred thousand rallied around the slogans "Work or Wages," and "Don't Starve—Fight" advanced by the unemployed councils and the Trade Union Unity League. A large proportion of the demonstrators were employed workers who had individually quit their jobs, or struck in a body, in order to swell the protest and display their solidarity with the unemployed.

In the banners carried, in the speeches made to the crowds and to the city mayors when access to them was secured, no paltry sops were proposed. Work or full wages, unemployment relief at the expense of the employers' profits and inheritances, the seven-hour day and five-day week, abolition of child exploitation, no discrimination against negroes, young workers, or women workers either on the job or in distribution of relief, and the final revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, were demanded.

The authorities did not fail to have ready their attempted answer—violent repression. Clubs, fists, mounted police, gas bombs, armoured motor cycles, riot wagons, guns, and fire hose were all mobilised to safeguard American democracy. In sixteen cities the officials, overawed by the unexpected throngs, drew in their horns, and the unemployed and their fellow demonstrators had undisputed use of the streets and city hall plazas. In the other twenty-two cities, police brutality knew few bounds. In Washington, D.C., tear-gas was used to scatter the crowds when a speaker sought to use the railing around Hoover's White House as a platform. In Milwaukee, now enjoying its twentieth year of Socialist Party control or near control, the police rode into the crowd, beating men, women, and children indiscriminately, and then raided the Communist Party headquarters, smashing the furniture, confiscating the literature, and stealing the cash. The pinnacle of ruling class hooliganism was reached in New York, where 400 police and plain clothes detectives smashed up the demonstration when it attempted to march to City Hall after being refused a permit. According to the *World*, witnesses—

saw women struck in the face with blackjacks, boys beaten by gangs of seven and eight policemen, and an old man backed into a doorway and

knocked down time after time, only to be dragged to his feet and struck with fist and club.

They saw detectives, some wearing reporters' cards in hat bands, many wearing no badges, running wildly through the crowd, screaming as they beat and kicked those who looked to them like Communists. They saw women thrown down by the crowd, and knocked over by the horses. They heard men, screaming that they were not reds, go down under nightsticks . . . They saw men with blood streaming down their faces dragged into the temporary police headquarters and flung down to await the patrol wagons to cart them away.

Instructed by previous demonstrations, the crowds were far from passive. More than one bluecoat was roundly belaboured with his own club. Working-class militancy has never before been shown on so widespread a scale. Nevertheless throughout the country 256 demonstrators were arrested, and 155 were injured so seriously as to require medical attention. Among those arrested in New York were William Z. Foster, secretary of the Trade Union Unity League, and Robert Minor, editor of the *Daily Worker*. Seized on the triple charge of unlawful assembly, inciting to riot, and felonious assault, they were held in the excessive bail of \$12,500 each.

On the heels of the demonstrations, a national preliminary conference on unemployment was held in New York on March 29 and 30. The credentials committee reported 215 delegates from 49 cities and 19 industries in 18 States. Of these, 47 were negro workers, 12 were women, and 32 were young workers. A draft programme, submitted by the Trade Union Unity League, was adopted with slight modifications. It calls for organisation of unemployed councils in all industrial cities, operating in close harmony with the militant unions of the T.U.U.L., through joint committees of action, with a city committee of the councils, on which the unions shall be represented, to co-ordinate the work. The demands adopted for the unemployed included those popularised in the March 6 meetings; the abolition of the speed-up against wage cuts system and for wage increases; homes for workers; oust the persecutors of the workers; abolition of political blacklist; free speech and assembly; free employment agencies; release of all class war prisoners; abolition of all vagrancy laws; six-hour day for youth under eighteen; prohibition of employment of children under fourteen years; abolition of underground and night work in dangerous industries for women and youth; and abolition of discrimination against and persecution of foreign-born workers.

No longer able to deny or to belittle, capitalist spokesmen are at last admitting the magnitude of the unemployment wave which has deluged American "prosperity." It is confessed in the United States Senate that "known unemployment is now 3,100,000," while "the actual unemployment is twice that amount." The American Federation of Labour announces that in February, 22 per cent. of its reporting members were unemployed, as against 20 per cent. in January. This statement confirms the estimate of the *Daily Worker*, that 7,000,000 are now jobless, or one out of every five wage-workers in the country.

BOOK REVIEW

THE EARLY INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF KARL MARX

Marx-Engels Gesamt Ausgabe, Erste Abteilung, Band I, Erster und Zweiter Halb-Band. (Marx-Engels Verlag, Berlin. lxxxiv and 620 pp., and xiv and 374 pp. ; 18 marks and 12 marks.)

K. Marx i F. Engels Sochinienia. Vol. I. (State Publishing Co, Moscow. xxxii and 663 pp.)

THE beginning of publication of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels' collected works in a complete "International Edition," to consist of forty tomes, and in Russian and French selected editions, has passed almost unnoticed in this country. Yet for the Marxian student and revolutionary, and even for the bourgeois economist and scientist, it marks a new era in the systematic study of the great literary heritage which the founders of scientific socialism left to the world. That such a complete edition is possible at all is entirely due to the indefatigable labours of Professor Ryazanov and the Marx-Engels Institute, backed by the generous endowment of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R.

The value of such a definitive edition as the "International" is planned to be scarcely needs stressing ; but the gigantic nature of the task thus in course of accomplishment can hardly be realised even by a comparatively advanced Marxist, until he begins to dip into the first two volumes of that edition. Says Professor Ryazanov in his general introduction : " Our edition has first and foremost to establish the objective basis for the scientific study of all the problems bound up with Marx and Engels' life and activity, in other words to reproduce all Marx and Engels' intellectual heritage systematically and with the maximum of exactitude. We shall provide not only the ' works ' in the narrow sense of the word, not only all articles already published, but also all the remaining unpublished works left in manuscript, all unpublished articles and fragments. Marx and Engels' preparatory labours (the assembling of materials, outlines, sketches, drafts, fragments which were not used in various works) will also be utilised, and wherever it seems necessary will be provided in appendices." In addition to all their known extant letters, the edition will include all letters to Marx and Engels which throw light on their personalities and especially on their practical literary activity. In the definitive " International " edition all writings are to be printed in the language in which they were originally written or saw the light.

The extraordinarily valuable results of this painstaking and devoted method are evident in the two volumes before me. Hitherto even the comparatively well-informed German Marxist had to be content with Mehring's far from exhaustive *Literary Remains of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, and with his and other biographers' personal views as to the early intellectual activity of the future leaders of scientific socialism. And because of the comparative paucity of the materials dealt with by him, even Mehring fell into many errors in dealing with this early period. To-day the German-reading Marxist can trace for himself the path by which Marx and Engels came to socialism, and these two volumes provide the first part of Marx's road, his course from

higher school essays and abstract university dissertations on classic philosophy, to “Young Hegelianism” and an analysis of the Hegelian “Philosophy of Right,” to his polemical war on behalf of bourgeois radicalism against Prussian despotism; then his first steps towards an independent dialectic materialism founded on the Hegelian method, but rejecting the Hegelian conclusions, and simultaneously his first considerable advance towards analysis of social and political questions from a strictly economic and class standpoint.

These first two volumes of the “International” edition (of which the Russian first volume is an abridgement, the rejected matter consisting of minor and comparatively unimportant writings, fragments, notes and letters of interest only to the advanced specialist) are complementary, the first volume being devoted to Marx’s major writings from 1837 to 1843, the second volume bringing together letters by and to him, excerpts from books, and personal documents throwing further biographical and intellectual light on Marx’s life.

After his university career at Jena Marx turned almost directly to becoming a publicist first as a contributor then as chief editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the theoretical and practical organ of German bourgeois radicalism. Here and elsewhere during this period Marx writes as a convinced bourgeois democrat, struggling on behalf of German bourgeois society against the Prussian feudalistic censor, for the freedom of the bourgeois Press, in favour of the reporting of proceedings in the Landtag, to further the cause of the coming bourgeois revolution. But although during Marx’s few months of co-operation and editorship, the *Rheinische Zeitung* shifted rapidly from being an organ of the orthodox German bourgeoisie to an organ of the advanced radical intelligentsia, Marx himself was moving even more rapidly, and it is highly significant that one immediate cause of his withdrawal from the *Zeitung* was his series of articles on the condition of the Moselle vine-district peasants. His ardent defence of the exploited vine-growers, and his readiness to ignore secondary political and philosophical issues, regarded by German radicalism and the young Hegelians as primary and fundamental, in favour of material and economic issues, indicate how swiftly Marx was becoming pre-occupied with the fundamental problems arising out of capitalist economics.

From the *Rheinische Zeitung* Marx turned to the establishment jointly with Arnold Ruge of a journal in which their ideas could be expressed more fully and freely than in any publication subject to control by the Prussian censor. Thus the two friends came to found the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* in Paris. What Marx wanted to achieve by this publication is revealed in a letter to Ruge on March 18, 1843, in which he suggested the title of *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* as being better than Ruge’s previous *Deutsch Jahrbuch*, and maintained that his proposed title “would be a principle, an event fraught with consequences, an enterprise which can arouse enthusiasm.” Although in fact no French writer contributed to the *Jahrbuch*, Marx was hoping it would transcend the bounds of narrow nationalistic radicalism and become a forum for Franco-German radical thinkers.

Marx’s articles to the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* are of considerable interest for their revelation of the speed with which he was coming to grips with the philosophical and political problems confronting him. In both the

"International" and the Russian editions, Professor Ryazanov has changed the hitherto accepted time-sequence of the articles, being guided not by the dates on which they were published, but by internal and manuscript evidence as to the dates of their composition. Thus whilst Marx's article on the "Jewish Question," in which he discusses the relationship between human and political emancipation in the light of the German Jews' demand for political and civil emancipation, provides the first rough outlines of his analysis of the disintegration of the old (feudal) society and the composition of the new (bourgeois) society, not a hint is to be found in it of a socialistic solution to the problem of society, not a word as to human emancipation being dependent on proletarian emancipation. Yet in the "Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'" written almost immediately after—and the work which Marx himself afterwards, in his introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy*, described as "the first work which I undertook in order to resolve the doubts which were torturing me"—he takes his own analysis of society one step farther, and postulates the existence of classes as the fundamental feature of every society which has so far existed. "On what," he says, "does a partial, purely political revolution depend? On the circumstances that part of civil society emancipates itself and achieves a universal hegemony, that a definite class, arising out of its own special situation, undertakes the emancipation of all society. That class liberates all society but only, given the condition that society as a whole finds itself in the position of that class, *i.e.*, has at its disposal money or education for instance, or can acquire these at will." But having arrived at this point, having recognised the class basis of society, and having postulated that society as a whole can be emancipated only under certain conditions, Marx makes his final, culminating deduction. As the result of the economic basis of modern society, a new class, the proletariat, is engendered, and that class is the product of a society which has disintegrated into orders, a society which has failed fully to emancipate itself. And because of this, "In demanding the *negation of private property* (Marx's italics) the proletariat is only elevating into a principle of society that which society has elevated into *its* [the proletariat's—H.C.S.] principle, which has been materialised in *it* without its concurrence, as the negative result of society."

Thus by 1843 Marx had reached his final conclusion, as to the class nature of society and the task of the working class in that society. He had reached his conclusions philosophically, and his enunciation of his thesis is still couched in terms of Hegelian philosophy, it itself part of a contribution to, as well as a criticism of, a philosophy.

With Professor Ryazanov's introductions to each volume and his general introduction to the "International" edition as an invaluable guide, the student has in these two volumes a unique record of Marx's intellectual development down to the eve of his membership of the Communist League, and extending from his early orthodox bourgeois radicalism to the first adumbration of a philosophy wherein society as a whole is to find its emancipation through the rise to power of a class which, because of its class distinctions and class reservation of power, bourgeois society has refused to emancipate.

H. C. S.

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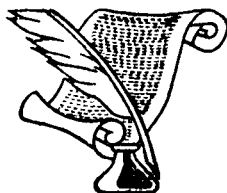
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